



Make fun RESIN AND SILVER EARRINGS pg 32

SINCE
1947

LAPIDARY JOURNAL JEWELRY ARTIST

JULY 2015

TRY OUT A
**New Wire
Technique**
*with these
trendy hearts*

Get
the kit!
DETAILS
PG 45



MAKE THIS **SHAMAN PENDANT**

with bezel,
prong, and
tube setting

PAGE 20

**LEARN TIPS &
TRICKS** on how to
shoot your jewelry



Video available!
Details page 54

SOCIAL UPDATE

Grow Your Business
with Google+, VISEO,
and Polyvore



*Brass is the
New Black!*

GET STARTED
WITH THIS
**EXCLUSIVE
BRASS** jewelry
making collection

As seen in:
**COOL TOOLS &
HIP TIPS!** PG 15

Lilian Chen's
Wire Hearts
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Tools That You Will Love



Basic Jewelers Kit
138.560E



Foredom Flex Shaft Kits
134.204



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112.608



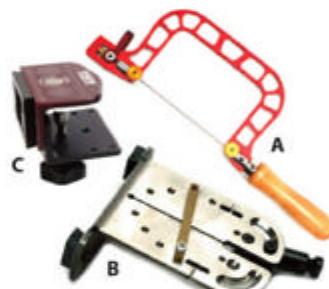
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143.101



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128.109X



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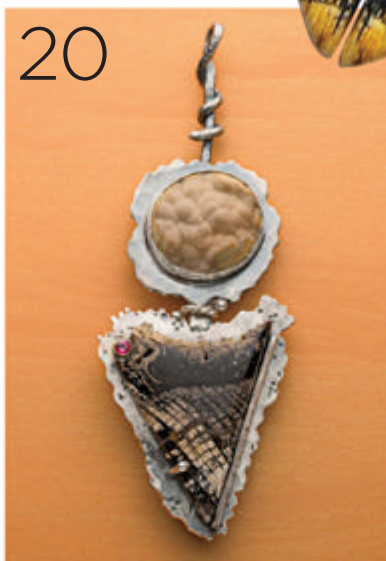


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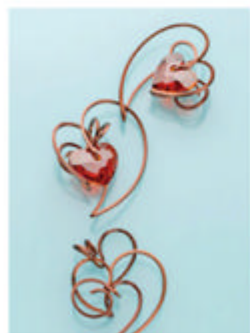
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PHOTOS: JIM LAWSON

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Brass Tactics



FOR YEARS — NO, DECADES! — I've railed against *precious* when applied to gems because of the arbitrary nature of its use, that is, limited to the commercially big three colored gems of ruby, sapphire, and emerald along with the ultra-hyped, ultra-commercial colorless gem, diamond. All trace their special status to ancient times and all have their appeal, even to me: it's the sly companion term *semiprecious* that makes me nuts. A backhanded compliment if ever

I've heard one, the description discounts by half more or less every other stone you might choose to put in jewelry, no matter that some of these other gems are more durable, arguably more beautiful, and certainly more rare than the hoity-toity precious patrol.

Yet I've barely ranted about the not remotely subtle counterpart of precious and base metals, and I think it's about time I did. Again I'll disclaim that the singled-out metals do have special qualities — they are also called noble for their resistance to corrosion, for one — and again their status goes back to a time when the separation made more sense. But that was then and this is now, and today we are more concerned with the ornamental use of jewelry than its symbolic invocation of power, and we know of and understand more about gems and metals both, muddying the distinction and making it increasingly out of date.

It's time for a new approach to jewelry materials: the question is not is it precious, but how good a jewelry material does it make. A good jewelry material is attractive to someone who'd wear it in jewelry; otherwise, what would be the point? A good jewelry material is also workable, so someone could work it into jewelry; otherwise, as above. It's durable when worn as or in jewelry; otherwise, ditto. And one more thing: a good jewelry material is available and affordable to jewelry makers; otherwise, it's quite literally useless.

At about \$17 an ounce in mid May, silver, once the mainstay of those who make jewelry for fun, has become a sometime option. There's plenty of it to buy, but it weighs up to \$100 kind of fast. Gold is great in jewelry and priced much lower than in recent years, but at more than \$1200 per ounce, it is still on the precious side for most jewelers who are not in business and for many customers of the jewelers who are, frequently making it a metal to be used only sparingly if at all.

So in this issue's Cool Tools and Hip Tips (page 14), Senior Editor Helen Driggs walks you through one of the most popular jewelry metals today, the gleaming, golden-colored alloy called brass. "Brass," Helen says, "is the new black," and I couldn't agree more.

Merle White

Merle.White@fwcommunity.com

P.S. Check out the special Brass Is the New Black Sampler of metal, tools, and information about working with them in the latest "As Seen in Cool Tools and Hip Tips Collection" at <http://bit.ly/brasskit>.

LAPIDARY JOURNAL JEWELRY ARTIST

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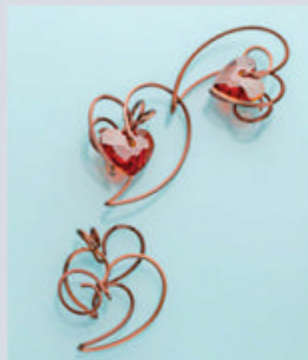
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YOUR TURN

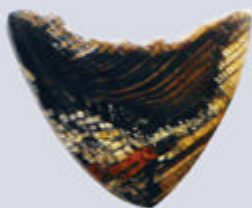
reader comments & sketches

NEXT TIME:



Lilian Chen's Square Wire Heart, COVER

Riff on a design feature of this piece such as color, texture, form, value, line, space, repetition, balance, contrast, unity, or variety for your sketch.



Sketch a setting for this Fossilized Red Oak cabochon from Smokin' Stones, page 18.

DEADLINES:

JULY 31, 2015

Email digital scans at 300 DPI or send photocopies of no more than three sketches per challenge, indicating the design factor that is your starting point. Sketches will not be returned.

WRITE TO US ANYTIME:

What do you think about what you've seen and read in *Lapidary Journal Jewelry Artist*?

SEND SKETCHES & LETTERS

for possible print or online publication to: K.Rosenbusch@interweave.com; or Lapidary Journal Jewelry Artist, 88 Glocker Way, #299, Pottstown, PA 19465.

Include your name, city, and state, and indicate "Your Turn" on the subject line or envelope.

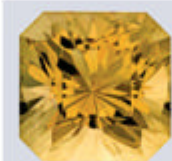
› DESIGN CHALLENGES



YOUR COVER RIFFS:

Designs based on Bill Fretz's Mountain Ring, March, 2015.

Shevvy Baker
Louisville, Kentucky



YOUR SETTINGS:

Designs based on Radiant Brilliant citrine, cut by Leon Agee, March, 2015.

Thomas Wickline
Tacoma, Washington



Nico Murray
Toronto, Ontario



Gina DeNave
Coopersburg, Pennsylvania



Linda Galanthay
Ithaca, New York

› LETTERS

Re: "Thunder Bay Amethyst Pendant," January/February 2015

On the cover of the January/February, 2015 issue of *Lapidary Journal Jewelry Artist*, you showed a picture of a Thunder Bay amethyst pendant by Betsy Lehndorff. The directions to make it never say what size pearls were used for the necklace. Could you please let us know so I can make the necklace using the correct size bead?

Judith Schuster
Wantagh, New York

Betsy Lehndorff responds: I made the pearl "choker" out of seed pearls. They were tiny — 1 x 2 mm. The phrase "labor intensive" is an apt description of the process. It took me about 12 hours to string the pearls. I also cast the clasp and embellished the cones, so those are not available in stores. [Find this issue online at shop.jewelrymakingdaily.com.]





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THEIR TURN

a gallery of this issue's contributors



PHOTO: AZUR MELE

AZUR MELE'S Sugilite and String

Photograph

"Photographing Gems & Jewelry"
Page 48

"Easy Jewelry Photography"
Page 56



PHOTO: LAUREL NATHANSON

LAUREL NATHANSON'S Hinged Silver Bracelet

Sterling silver, acrylic, found toy bits

Metal & More
Page 32



BETSY LEHDORFF'S Kitties Pendant III

Sterling silver,
castings,
moonstone,
peridot, antique
mother of pearl

"How to
Develop a Line:
Production
Earrings"
Page 26

PHOTO: BETSY LEHDORFF



PHOTO: COURTESY JUST JULES

JULIE ROMANENKO'S Pendant

Lightning Ridge opal with
pave diamonds

Trends
Page 36

PHOTO: JIM LAWSON

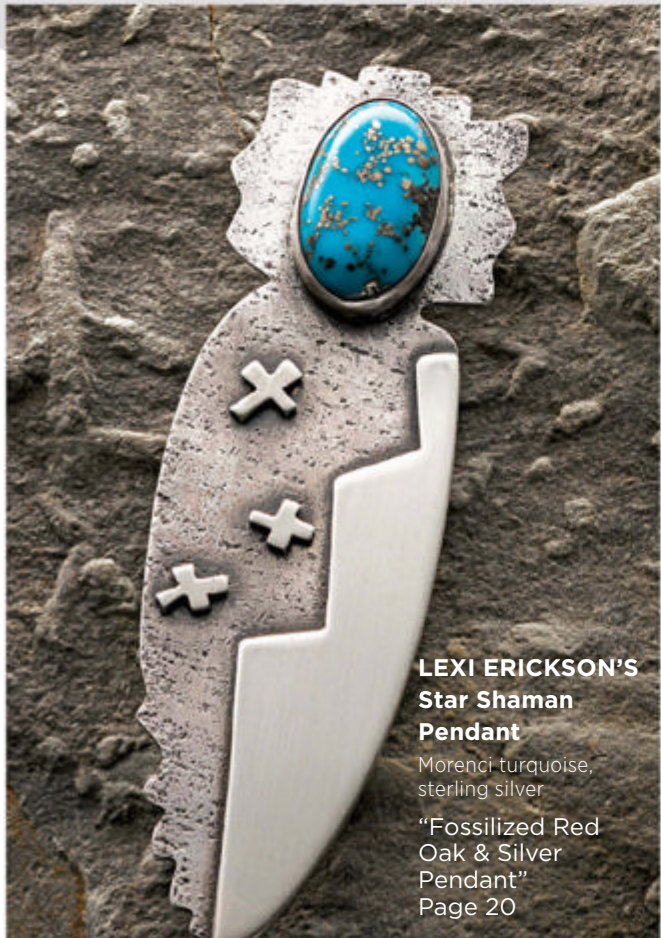


HELEN DRIGGS'S Necklace Two

Recycled steel, recycled silk, recycled cotton, coconut shell, acrylic resin, copper, brass

Cool Tools & Hip Tips
Page 14

PHOTO: JIM LAWSON



LEXI ERICKSON'S Star Shaman Pendant

Morenci turquoise,
sterling silver
"Fossilized Red
Oak & Silver
Pendant"
Page 20

? WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?

Share your expertise with other readers in a project, demo, or article and you'll be invited to show an example of your work here. Contributors' guidelines can be requested by emailing MWhite@Interweave.com, subject line: LJJA Guidelines.

PHOTO: JEFF FULKERSON



JEFF FULKERSON'S Ring

Royston ribbon turquoise,
silver

"New at Buying
Lapidary Rough?"
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PHOTO: COURTESY ALISHAN



ALISHAN HALEBIAN'S Lighthouse Figure

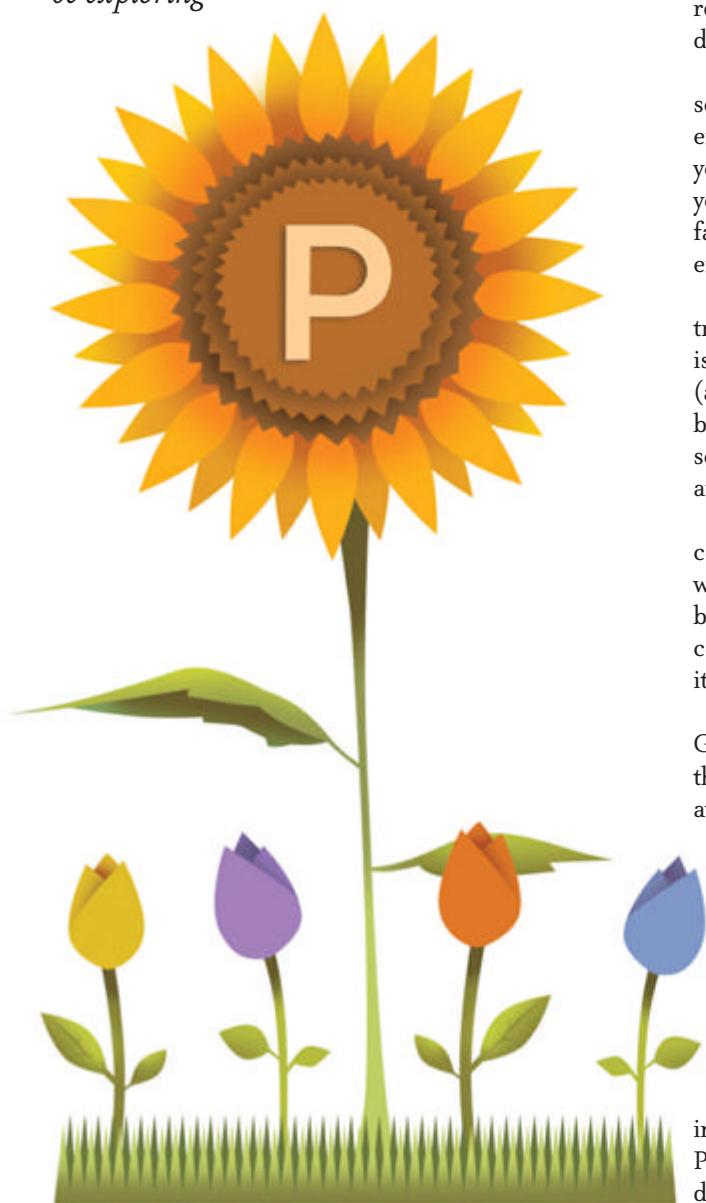
18K gold, Mexican fire opal, diamonds,
carved ivory

Trends Page 36

By Cathleen McCarthy

New Ideas for **Social Media Marketing**

*alternative social platforms you should
be exploring*



If you have a website or an online shop, you're probably on Twitter and Facebook — or at least one or the other. Maybe you've been fooling around with Instagram as well and have a few Pinterest boards up.

While these are all great platforms for building a jewelry brand, there may be a couple others you've overlooked.

Google Plus. You won't find follow buttons for this platform on many jewelry artists' websites, but that may be all the more reason to put up one yourself — and a G+ profile to go with it.

Danielle Miller has a Google+ profile, set up using the same profile shot and banner photo of her jewelry that she uses on Twitter. Like me, Danielle posts there every month or so, usually something she posted to her Facebook page as well. I suspect she does it for the same reason I do: G+ is the one social media platform tied directly to Google.

If you have a website, you know no matter how much social media marketing you do or how many other search engines you register your site with, the lion's share of your traffic comes from Google. That means anything you do to put your content in their line of vision probably falls under the heading of VISEO (very important search engine optimization).

For a while, some of us bloggers were going to a lot of trouble to establish "Google Authorship," an official registration process Google set up that caused our mug shots (avatars posted on our G+ profiles) to pop up beside our bylines in Google searches. It was widely held that Google search was giving precedence to those who registered for authorship.

When Google announced last year that it was discontinuing authorship, most of us were relieved and wondered if Google Plus would be next on the chopping block. To date, the search giant's social media platform continues to limp along, and there's no reason to believe it's not influencing search results.

Recent studies show people who have a presence on Google Plus spend an average of seven minutes a month on the site, a pittance compared to the hours many of us while away on Facebook. But it only takes a few minutes to put up a profile on Google Plus and seconds to post something to it, and the posts look very polished.

While you're not likely to get much direct response from other users — their seven minutes probably won't overlap with yours — you may be surprised to find it's your Google+ post that pops up months later when you "google" your name with that topic. I rarely get a "+1," the Google equivalent of a Facebook "like," but some marketing experts say I may be getting more out of pitching something into the apparent black hole of my Google Plus page than I am posting it on Facebook where it may get dozens of likes, shares, and comments.

Polyvore. Launched in 2007, Polyvore is a “community-powered social commerce” website active mainly with fashion and design communities. If your jewelry looks like something you might find in a fashion magazine, this platform is worth checking out. I was dragging and dropping within the first minute I logged on, and very quickly created a spiffy little fashion spread, if I do say so myself. Polyvore then invited me to “pin it” to one of my Pinterest boards — or at least, their share buttons invited me.

Polyvore members curate product images — including images of your own jewelry posted online — into a shared product index, then use them to create “sets” or image collages. Image collages have become a familiar part of social media, especially the visual kind of social media I recommend for jewelry artists. Pinboards are themselves a collage of clickable images that lead to the webpage where the image was originally posted.

Instagram posts also become image collages. If you call up someone’s Instagram profile, that’s exactly what you see: a collage of images that click over to their most recent posts. Click on “photos” in the sidebar of a Facebook page you’ll see a similar image collage, posted chronologically from the most recent.



GO SOCIAL



Discover Cathleen’s advice and tips for using other social media platforms from her OnDemand web seminar,

Social Strategy: How to Build Your Jewelry Brand with Social Media

AVAILABLE AT
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Click on one and you can find the original description, links, and comments on that photo, just like on Instagram.

The difference with Polymore is that you can manipulate the images to create your own collage, and the result looks exactly like the typical fashion magazine product page. You drag images they provide and add your own. What’s more, you can actually incorporate your jewelry into these sets — or “spreads,” to use magazine parlance.

What’s particularly useful to jewelry retailers is that if you establish a shop here, when a user clicks on the jewelry, a product listing window pops up with the price, and they can put it in a cart and purchase it.

By May 2014, Polyvore was getting 20 million monthly unique visitors.

Its free app gets high customer reviews, as does the Android version launched last year. The app allows you to mix and match styles, create collages from your saved items, and clip your own photos from the Internet. If you clip images of your jewelry via desktop, you can more easily

caption them, which is important for making sure your brand stays on the jewelry — especially if the image gets picked up on sites like Pinterest.

I don’t see many jewelry artists playing on Polyvore, but a few jewelry sellers have found ways to utilize it. Joanne Teichman, co-owner of Ylang 23, the Dallas-based jewelry retailer I profiled last month liked it so much she added the Polyvore app to her website (ylang23.com) and invited customers to make their own Polyvore image collages with jewelry sold on the site.

CATHLEEN MCCARTHY is a freelance writer whose stories appear in *Town & Country*, *Art & Antiques*, and her own site, TheJewelryLoupe.com.

find more online

“How to Make a Fashion Spread with your Jewelry”



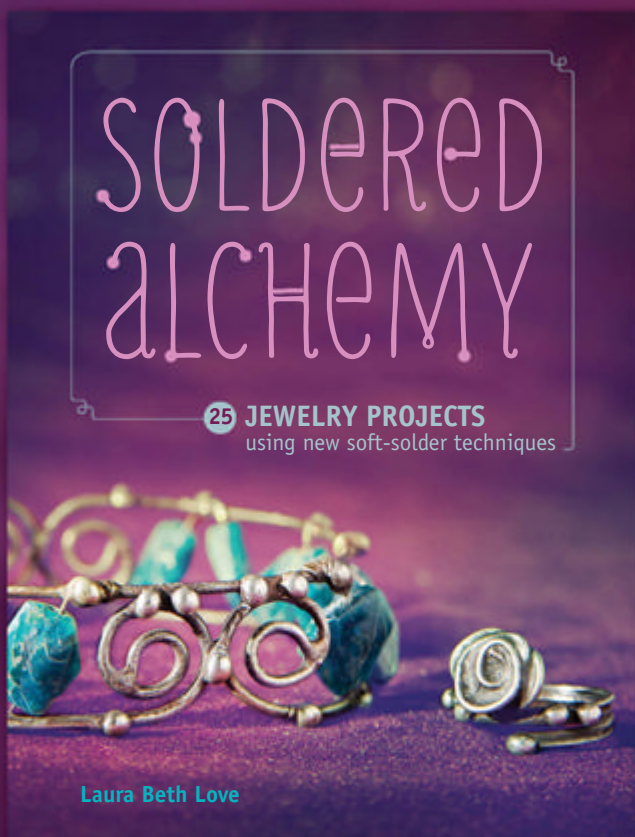
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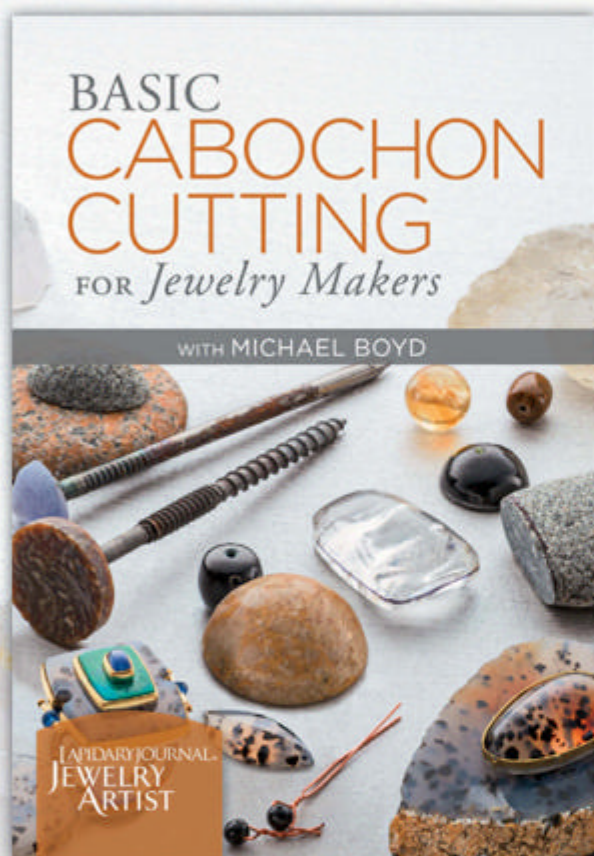
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COOL TOOLS & HIP TIPS

BY HELEN I. DRIGGS | PRODUCT PHOTOS: JIM LAWSON

This superb alloy is affordable, versatile, easy to use and back in vogue

Brass Is the New Black

IT USED TO GET A BAD RAP. Brassy was once something you didn't want as a hair color, and "the Brass" were maligned leaders with no respect. Brass as a color or material had the reputation of being too aggressive, tawdry, imitation, cheap, base, or just "too." Brass was something lesser.

Right before the Industrial Revolution, the alloy pinchbeck (88.8% copper, 11.2% zinc) was invented, which allowed ordinary folks to own affordable yellow metal jewelry that was showy and "believable." Anyone could buy it for pennies by mail order out of the Sears catalog. Mass production brass "costume" jewelry industry boomed, although the upper classes who could afford gold dismissed brass as an unacceptable jewelry metal. That prejudice still holds, and you've probably even said it yourself — "Oh, that's just a base metal." Well, stop it.

Brass is beautiful to work with and available in many forms — sheet, wire, findings, stampings, components, patterned stock, and castings can all be had for a song. Saw it, solder it, cast it, rivet it, plate it, etch it, hammer it, patinate it, whatever. It's tough. You really can't kill it, and believe me, I have tried. Best of all? Modern brass can be used with the old vintage stock you sometimes find in flea markets or online. I am seeing it everywhere now, and like fashion trends, old is new. Um, hello? This new love for brass isn't news to me. Forget those hot, seasonal color pronouncements from the fashionistas on Bravo! I'm the fabricationista and found my

new black years ago, thank you very much.

What Is Brass?

Brass is an alloy of mostly copper. Alloys are metal mixtures which have been chosen for desirable traits, like color, hardness, tensile strength, luster, melting point, whatever. There are actually hundreds of alloys named brass, and each one has different properties depending on what it is used for. There are brass plumbing fixtures, hardware, machine parts, decorative objects, cooking utensils, etc. But all of those alloys are basically the same composition: copper + zinc = brass. Sometimes, small amounts of other metals are included but mostly in commercial manufacturing or in brass casting grain to improve fluidity. For jewelry fabrication and most hobby metalwork, there are several common, universally accepted, and most-used brass alloy "recipes" available in sheet, wire, and mill stock. Again, these are not so much rules as guidelines.

Yellow brass (also called cartridge brass): 70% copper + 30% zinc

Rich lo brass (also called red brass; also called nu-gold): 85% copper + 15% zinc

Commercial bronze (also called bronze or jeweler's bronze): 90% copper + 10% zinc

 **As seen in COOL TOOLS**

BRASS IS THE NEW BLACK SAMPLER

Everything you need for your own brass creations

- Patterned brass sheet
- Yellow and red brass sheet
- Red brass wire
- Jax Green Patina
- *The Jewelry Maker's Field Guide*
- Six jewelry projects with brass
- And more!

Available at <http://bit.ly/brasskit>.



One contributing factor to the dismissal of brass as an acceptable jewelry metal is its high copper content. Copper by itself is a good news/bad news thing. It's soft. It oxidizes or tarnishes rapidly, can blacken the skin, and it will never, ever shine like silver. But a smart metalsmith will use copper for its advantages, so take note — nothing forms like copper. Nothing patinates like copper. It doesn't cost a lot. It comes in zillions of shapes, gauges, and forms. When copper makes friends with zinc and becomes brass, it gets stronger, takes on a yellow color, and you can hold an acetylene torch on it — steady, at full blast — and not melt it by accident. Brass is the ultimate practice metal, and

HAVE A TOOL, MODIFICATION, OR BENCH TRICK TO SHARE?

 Email us at Helen.Driggs@fwcommunity.com, subject line "Cool Tools." Please include your complete contact information with all submissions.



I also use it for my “real” work specifically for its patina potential. I just love the look of aged, chocolaty, blackened, brass with the old, recycled stuff I regularly use. And certain Japanese patinas will only work on yellow brass. Where do I get it? I thought you’d never ask . . .

Metal Stock and Sheet Plus

For lovers of brass to fabricate with, New York City’s **Metalliferous** is Mecca. They stock a huge range of sheet, chain, tubing, wire, shaped rod, and manufactured brass products in 3 alloys: Yellow Brass, Rich Lo Brass, and Commercial Bronze. Plus, they have an incredible array of patterned stock, which I fabricate with as is or use for transfer embossing in my rolling mill. My personal faves? The ones that resemble basketball skin, waves, hammer strikes, textiles, and pebbles. One of my all-time favorite activities is spending several uninterrupted hours rooting through the dusty “old stock” brass stampings,



findings, parts and discontinued items in the back of the store. It’s like being Indiana Jones on a treasure hunt; you never know what you’ll find, and I bring it home by the bag. Because Metalliferous understands brass, they also stock the complete line of Jax patinas in both large and small bottles, so you can color it anything from green to dichroic black in a heartbeat. Get some.

MORE AT METALLIFEROUS.COM

Halstead Bead is rapidly expanding their stock choices for the non-precious (and precious, too) metal lover. Bracelet blanks, tags, ring bands, plaques, and other brass components are ready and waiting to be soldered, stamped, textured, etched, formed, or riveted to your heart’s content. I love the 4.8mm wide bracelet bases (BU716) because all I have to do is top them off with something interesting and boom! Almost instant jewelry.

MORE AT HALSTEADBEAD.COM



Rio Grande is also expanding their selection of “base” metals to include a fine selection of sheet, tubing, and rod. What I love are these Cable (62981220) or Rolo (628982120) antique brass chains on 20-foot spools. The feel of these chains is smooth and slick, unlike many of the mass-market brass chains you find next to the plastic flowers in those big box hobby or craft stores. And I could not live without their brass sheet solder (503052), because it is an almost perfect color match for most yellow

brass. It flows fast and far, so flux selectively and it won’t disappoint you. I used it for a project we’ll be running next issue, so stay tuned for that.

MORE AT RIOGRANDE.COM

Wirejewelry.com

has expanded their already nice patterned red brass strip line to include several more designs (H25-3 A through H) and now also stocks plain sheet brass in pre-cut 6x6 squares in a range of gauges from 30 up to 18. The strips are one solder join away from a bangle bracelet, have a sweet vintage vibe, and the wider ones can also be (gently) domed into a synclastic curve with a curved wooden dap or hammer peen. Or use round forming pliers for instant ring bands. What’s not to love?

MORE AT WIREJEWELRY.COM



Premade Components and More

Fire Mountain Gems’s new catalog nearly gave me whiplash when I opened it last month because I was thrilled to see that they have added a large selection of pre-made brass rivets, washers, tube rivets, grommets, and — drum roll please — rare and elusive “micro-hardware” for cold connections. If you have been with me for long, you might remember I designed a bracelet for the cover of our December 2007 Issue that relied on micro-hardware to join it and which also caused a huge revival of interest in cold connections. This





Vintaj

is the stuff, kids, and now it's really easy to find without knowing a darn thing about machine screws. Sold in pre-counted bags, everything's available in several finishes, including shiny, yellow brass.

MORE AT FIREMOUNTAINGEMS.COM

Then there's **Vintaj**. If you love finished components, you are required to check them out. I started to notice their products in the craft store a few years ago and was delighted with the antique look of their stampings and findings. Vintaj brass is made in the USA, nickel- and lead-free, and relies on eco-friendly, "green" patination methods for its color. Their natural brass (85% copper, 15% zinc) is a gorgeous hue, and their rivets are so well-behaved I recommend them to everyone. The filigrees and stampings, plaques, plates, and chain styles are a delight, and if you bead, they even stock brass crimps to match. Several new releases caught my eye: a sweet bird charm, fabrication-friendly double hoop drops, nicely shaped long ear wires, and a right-out-of-Downton, oblong filigree or lavalier await your making pleasure.

MORE AT VINTAJ.COM

I noticed **Trinity Brass Co.** when I was on a web crawl looking for something else several months ago, and I bookmarked them for this very moment. I'm totally smitten with their nickel- and lead-free brass which comes in six finishes and even in raw brass — which is just so awesome if you intend to solder it because you don't have to pickle off any existing patina. Filigree, findings, stampings, wings, plaques, and charms await you. How can you not love flowers, birds, and leaves? And if you are like me and love a surprise, there are also ever-changing mixes of discontinued products sold by weight. Get them while you can.

MORE AT TRINITYBRASSCO.COM



Trinity Brass



Nunn Design

Nunn Design is another fantastic source for stampings, settings, components, parts, and findings. Nature geek that I am, of course, I love the look of these plant and animal stampings, but there are also bezels ready to fill with resin or epoxy clay as well as rings, settings, and connectors galore. I love their inspiring photos, website, ideas, and products, too. Nunn Design is a real treat.

MORE AT NUNNDESIGN.COM

One More Thing

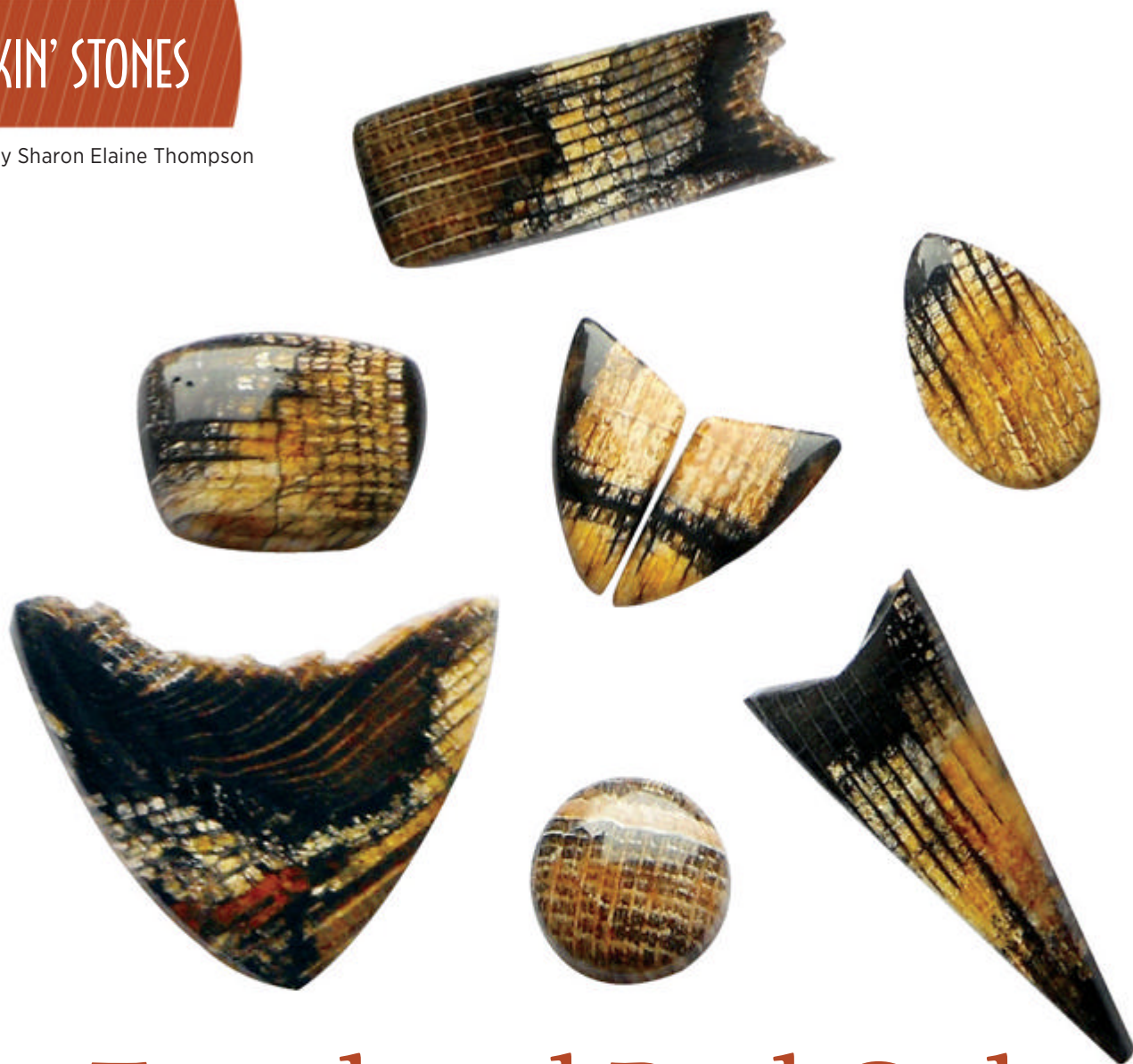
Brass isn't just to make jewelry of. Every jewelry studio should have a few essential brass tools hanging around. Brass makes a great, non-aggressive, non-marring material for buffing, cleaning, and fabricating other jewelry metals; it's not as hard as steel and really brings a nice finish to most jewelry metal. I use my brass planishing hammer, brass dapping block, and brass bench block all the time for riveting. A brass hammer is great for striking metal stamps (the one pictured here is from ImpressArt), and brass brushes with a little detergent are indispensable at the sink and in the flex shaft for cleanup and burnishing — especially on brass and copper. Oh, and on metal clay, too.



COMING NEXT TIME...
Forming Tools

HELEN DRIGGS is Senior Editor for *Lapidary Journal Jewelry Artist* and an experienced metalsmith and teacher. Follow her blog: materialsmithing.wordpress.com; Instagram feed: [hdriggs_fabricationista](https://www.instagram.com/hdriggs_fabricationista); and Twitter feed: [@fabricationista](https://twitter.com/fabricationista) for more jewelry-related fun.

By Sharon Elaine Thompson



Fossilized Red Oak

a stone from the past for today's jewelry

INTERESTING GEM MATERIALS show up in the strangest places. Via the magic of the internet, The Clamshell's Mark Lasater discovered a cache of fossilized red oak that was packed out of the wilds of Oregon more than 36 years ago. The patterning varies depending on whether it comes from the wider or narrower section of the limb. "This patterning is amazing," says Lasater. "I've never had a stone like this except for the fossil Sequoia."

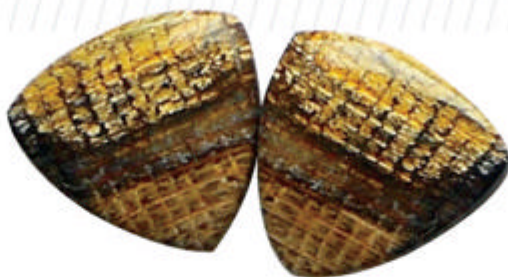
Lasater says there is some disagreement about whether the material was original from white, black, or red oak, but that is all beside the point for the designers who will want to use this rich-looking stone. Similar to dinosaur bone in terms of cell structure, "the pattern looks more like intricate basket weaving," says Lasater. The dark charcoal gray and brown contrasts nicely with yellows and creams — some of the stones have a touch of red ochre color — for a very elegant look.

“The understated color palette of the stones lends itself to pairing with a wide variety of jaspers or jades, raw diamonds, or basalt beads. Emphasizing the rusty red patches with bright red garnets would probably leave viewers salivating.”

All stones are custom cut by Lasater and trusted associates — there are no standard shapes or sizes, making them perfect for those special “stand out” designs. The understated color palette of the stones lends itself to pairing with a wide variety of jaspers or jades, raw diamonds, or basalt beads. Emphasizing the rusty red patches with bright red garnets would probably leave viewers salivating.

How much does it cost? All pieces are cut into cabs that make the best use of color and pattern. Stones are priced individually, based on size, color, and patterning, starting at \$35 per stone.

How hard is it to find? All the material comes from one chunk of tree limb, says Lasater, so supply is limited and, at this time, only available from The Clamshell.



What kind of jewelry can I put this in? Because the fossil wood has not been entirely replaced by silica (quartz) it has been stabilized to enhance durability. Hardness is 3 to 6, making earrings, brooches, and pendants the safest types of jewelry if you want to prevent wear.

How easy is it to set? Stones are cut with flat backs. For those experienced in setting cabs, it should be easy. Unusual shapes may present challenges to beginners.

What are best settings for this stone? Any, though most will use a bezel or interrupted bezel.

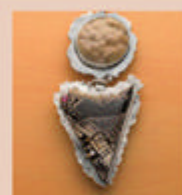
Artisan/studio dos and don'ts

Don't hammer bezels, do not use heat. Beware of steam and the ultrasonic, and avoid solvents.

Wearer dos and don'ts: Avoid solvents, such as many cleaning products. Do not store jewelry where the stones can be scratched by harder materials: garnets, tourmalines, topazes, sapphire, rubies, and diamonds.

SHARON ELAINE THOMPSON has written for *Lapidary Journal Jewelry Artist* since 1987. Her book, *Good Bones: the Elements and Principles of Design for Jewelry Makers*, is coming soon from Brynmorgen Press. You can learn more about her at sharonelainethompson.com.

set it



PAGE
20

**FOSSILIZED RED OAK
AND SILVER PENDANT**



SKILLS

- Sawing and filing
- Precise measuring
- Soldering

TIME IT TOOK

- 6 hours

Fossilized Red Oak & Silver Pendant

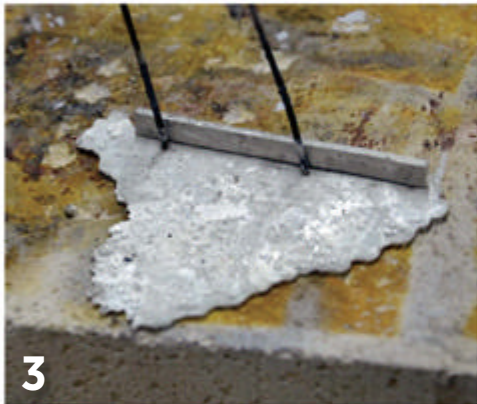
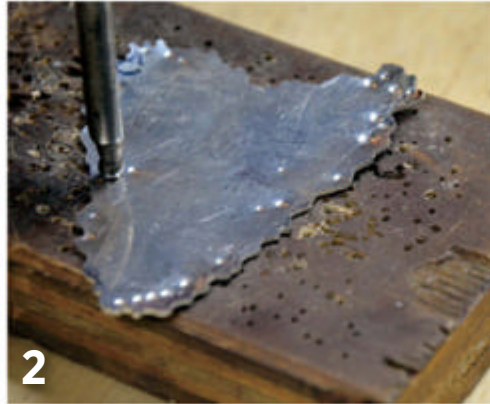
a shaman for the sawing-challenged

BY LEXI ERICKSON



IF YOU CAN'T SAW A STRAIGHT LINE,

this is the project for you! The inspiration for this shaman figure came from one of my old archaeological field journals from Largo Canyon, New Mexico. I've always liked the fact that he had on a necklace! Texturing the metal on this piece was a lot of fun, so just go crazy with a hammer and a center punch and make your own rocky-looking texture.



Create the Body

Photo 1 Draw around the perimeter of the stone for the “body” directly on the sheet, then draw and saw out a very rough and rocky looking edge. Allow extra room for the flat wire partial bezel and prong.

NOTE: I also set a 5mm padparadscha in the little hole on the side of the petrified red oak cab, so if your stone has any irregularity, use it to your advantage. The tube set also helps hold in the petrified red oak cab.

Photo 2 Use a small dapping punch or center punch to create divots randomly around the piece. Be sure to do this on a piece of wood for a deeper punch.

On a steel plate or bench block, hammer the piece for extra “rocky” texture. Create a background that will hold liver of sulfur in the texture to look dark and

“antiquey.”

Photo 3 Cut a length of flat wire to the length of the cab you are using. Because my stone had a straight side, and because I hate using a third hand to hold anything, I had to figure out how to keep the perfectly straight flat wire from falling over while I was soldering it. So I drilled 2 holes into my back plate, inserted T-pins, and leaned the wire up against them. Then it soldered perfectly when I used hard solder. I filled the holes, which were going to be behind the stone anyway, with a bit of wire and solder and filed it even with the back plate. Problem solved.

Photo 4 Line up the stone to make sure that everything will fit, and then hammer some texture along the top edge of the flat wire. I used a Fretz Sharp texture hammer. The lines on the wire should replicate the lines in the stone.

MATERIALS

20 gauge sheet silver
6 inches of 2mm x 5mm flat wire
1 inch of 16 gauge wire
8 inches of 10 gauge round wire
Bezel wire
Hard, medium, and easy solder
2 inches of 16 gauge twisted wire
¼ inch 5mm 18K gold tubing or a premade 18K gold tube setting
1 petrified Red Oak triangular cab
1 round drusy
1 padparadscha faceted stone

TOOLS

HAND AND FABRICATION: Jeweler's saw, #3/0 sawblades, texture and planishing hammers, bench block, center punch or dapping punch, #55 drill bit, flex shaft or Dremel, wide flat nose pliers, round nose pliers

LAYOUT: Fine pointed Sharpie

SOLDERING: Soldering set up, T-pins, old set of AA stainless tweezers

FINISHING: Liver of Sulfur, 3M ultra-fine sanding sponge, 3M radial bristle discs, pink and green, burnisher, prong setter set

SOURCES

Red Oak Jasper and drusy are from theclamshell.net, and prong setters are available from Allcraft tools, 800-645-7124. Most of the tools and materials for this project will be available from well-stocked jewelry supply vendors, many of whom can found in our Advertisers' Index, page 77.



Budget Challenges

Petrified Red Oak is a fairly hard to find stone and therefore rather pricey, but certainly worth it. Drusy is less expensive, but finding gorgeous natural drusys, especially with the texture of this one, will give you something to search for. And padparadscha is my very favorite faceted gemstone, so that was a something I did for love! They are quite expensive, hence the small size!

#1 Design Elements

I wanted to use a straight line as a partial bezel to emphasize the lines in the stone, yet I wanted to give the rough outline as shown in all petroglyphs because they are drawn on rough stone. The two together form a kind of tension and release that I find intriguing. I think emphasis is important, so the small stone is the emphasis; something that is unexpected. The shiny drusy presents emphasis against the earthiness of the larger body of the shaman. Also, I think the rugged outline of the body and head will move the eye around the piece.

Photo 5 Measure very precisely where the prong and tube set will be soldered down because they help hold in the stone and must be right up against the stone for a snug fit. Drill a hole for the prong with a #55 drill bit. Draw a bead on the 16 gauge wire with the torch, pickle and insert the prong in the hole. Place the tube set onto the back plate and solder both the prong and setting down at the same time with medium solder. Quench, pickle, and rinse.

TIP: Pay attention because the tube set may float on the bed of flux as it becomes liquid, so watch for any movement as you solder. If you choose, you may drill a hole in the back plate and insert a T-pin to help hold the tube setting in position. If you feel that the flat wire may fall over, you may use a pair of old AA tweezers to act as a heat sink, or use the T-pins again.

Photo 6 Design and cut out a back plate for the shaman's head. Fit a bezel around the stone you've chosen for the shaman head, and close it with hard solder. Solder the bezel to the back plate, quench, pickle, and rinse.

Create the Bail

Photo 7 Take the 10 gauge sterling round wire, and hammer it with the planishing hammer, then anneal it because bending 10 gauge wire without annealing is really tough to do. While you are annealing, heat one end a bit more so that it forms a soft balled shape.



Lexi on Southwestern Style

"Southwestern style — good southwestern style — has a timelessness and mystery to it, and is instantly recognizable all over the world. I'm influenced by the history, landscape, and the time I have spent in the Southwest. There is magic, light, and color there which is found nowhere else in the US. My design exercises — especially my shaman and concho designs — are hikes into her back-country, looking for and recording textures, colors, and the Spirit of Place, which then emerges in metal and stone as a piece of my soul."



To see more of Lexi's shamans and conchos and to learn her stone-setting techniques for creating them, check out her new video, "Special Approaches for Stones with Lexi Erickson."

AVAILABLE AT [HTTP://BIT.LY/LEXISTONES](http://bit.ly/lexistones)

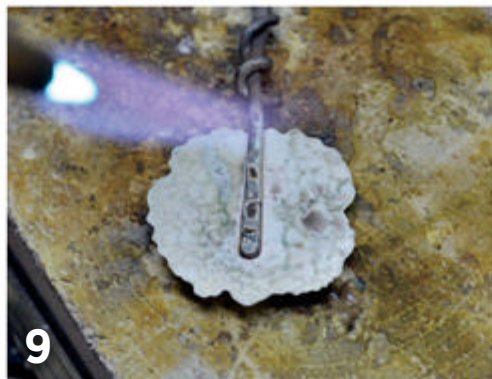


Photo 8 Using both round and flat nose pliers and brute strength, bend the wire in half to form a bail. Spiral part of the wire around straight part of the wire, which will attach to the head of the shaman. (I'd like to thank jeweler Allison Bellows for this great bail idea.)

Photo 9 Solder the bail to the back of the shaman's head using medium solder. Quench, pickle, and rinse. Hammer the remainder of the flat wire that you used for the partial bezel to put a nice texture on it. This will connect the head and body of the shaman.

Photo 10 Since the head of the shaman may be higher than the body of the shaman due to the bezel wire on the front of it, use a piece of scrap copper to level the two back plates. Work with the copper until both pieces are the same height on the block. Then insert a few chips of solder under the connecting piece which acts as the neck of the shaman, and solder it to the head and body of the shaman.

NOTE: I didn't use the 8 gauge bail wire, which could have been continued on down the shaman's body, because the 8 gauge wire didn't give me the stability needed.

Photo 11 Quench, pickle, and rise,

and then clip off the protruding part of the 16 gauge wire from the back because the soldering is all finished. Sand it flush with the back plate.

Finishing the Pendant

Photo 12 Choose a prong setter to fit over the tube set. Insert the faceted stone and burnish the tube set closed by rocking the hand piece back and forth and around in circles.

I added a necklace as a bit of decoration, as many petroglyphs of shamans show them wearing jewelry. I just twisted some twisted wire around his neck after drawing a bead on each end. You could certainly add some beads or decorate him as you see fit.

Set the cabs, and finish with liver of sulfur if you desire. Finish the piece by polishing with the 3M radial bristle discs and 3M sanding sponges. Burnish the edges of the shaman for that little bit of elegance. Now you have a piece of history from the American Southwest. Enjoy wearing your delightful and historical shaman.

LEXI ERICKSON is a Contributing Editor to *Lapidary Journal Jewelry Artist* and *Jewelry Making Daily* and is also the President of Wubbers University. She has a number of best-selling DVDs on soldering and various jewelry techniques available at shop.interweave.com. She lives in Denver, Colorado with her family and a menagerie of cats and dogs.

#1 Design Challenge

- Dealing with the straight flat wire so it didn't fall over during soldering.
- The unevenness of the back plates. I used a taller bezel wire because the druzy is a thick stone, so that make the head back plate about 2mm taller when I went to solder the connecting piece to the backplates.
- The 8 gauge bail wire was very thick to bend and work with.



see
more
work

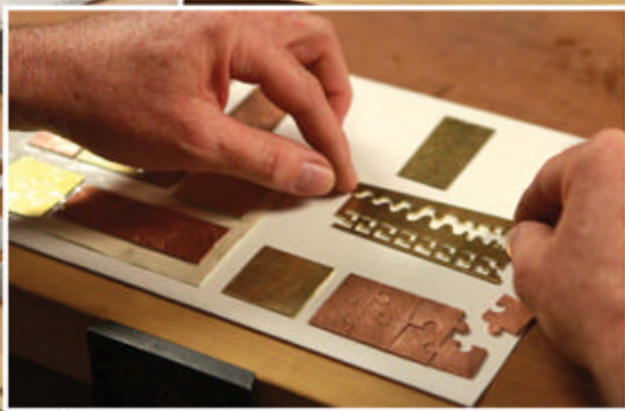
Their Turn
PAGE 8

Saw *like* a pro!

Dive into the fundamentals for working with this important tool



Join award-winning goldsmith and jewelry artist Michael David Sturlin for this workshop packed with helpful information on the jeweler's saw. Learn how to turn the main obstacles of sawing into your greatest strengths! Begin with sawing a straight line, and before long you'll progress to curves, stairs, peaks, waves, spirals, and beyond.



Launch into your new dimension of jewelry making at:
shop.jewelrymakingdaily.com/JewelrySaw

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SKILLS

- Advanced soldering
- Production jewelry making
- Burnishing round bezel cups
- Paper crafting

TIME IT TOOK

7 hours plus
24 hours for drying
and 4 hours for
tumbling



HOW TO DEVELOP A LINE: Production Earrings

How one artist created a small production run and cashed in

BY BETSY LEHDORFF

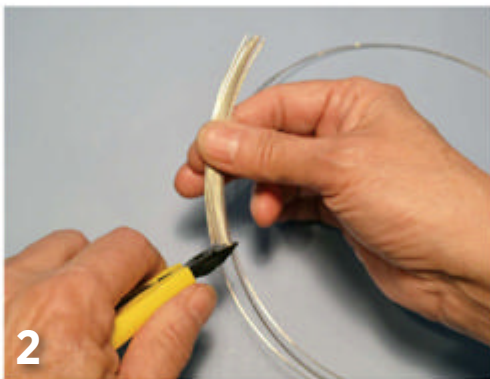
IT'S TOUGH FOR US CREATIVE TYPES to make the same thing over and over and over again. But this kind of discipline can produce unexpected results. At least that's what Mary Kernahan believes. By the end of last year's show season, she made enough money to pay all of her booth fees plus buy a blueberry leather La-Z-Boy sofa to relax in.

"I was tired of giving away a \$300 piece of jewelry to pay a booth fee," the Westland, Michigan silversmith says. She's also an instructor at Armstrong Tool & Supply in Livonia.

"So I was looking at my scrap one day. I figured if I rolled the pieces out, they would be large enough to turn into earrings," she says. A one-of-a-kind bracelet takes Mary at least eight hours to make. But 30 pairs of her \$10 earrings can be done in less than two hours. And voila — a sofa.

"I already had all the tools — a rolling mill at home, disc cutters, doming tool; the only thing I bought new was a punch," she says. To speed up the process, she buys sterling silver ear wires in bulk, and a friend created custom earring cards for her that are easy to display on a rack.

So, here's a way to turn yourself into a selling machine, using the challenging project below. But before you buy all of the components, you may want to experiment by making a dozen pairs first. Or develop your own ideas.



Design

Photo 1 When you're ready to go into production, assemble all tools and jewelry components.

Photo 2 Put on safety glasses or a magnification visor. Using flush cutters and ruler, measure and cut one piece of 20-gauge wire 3½ inches long. Use it to measure and cut the rest of the wire. Cut each end flush. For 20 pairs of

earrings, you'll repeat this 40 times.

Photo 3 Bunch the wires together, push into the file, and smooth the ends. Repeat with the other end.

Photo 4 On top of a steel bench block, place piece of 2x4 lumber that you have drilled through with a ⅜-inch bit. Insert a 10mm mandrel, place a bezel cup face down, and hallmark the back with a stamp and brass hammer.

MATERIALS

40 10mm round opaque cabochons for 20 pairs of earrings
40 10mm round sterling silver bezel cups
12½ feet or 0.66 ounces of 20-gauge round sterling silver wire
1 syringe medium paste solder
Graph paper
Moore's fine-grade, snap-on abrasive disks and mandrel or pumice wheels
Two-part 330 Epoxy
Toothpicks

TOOLS

HAND: Straight edge; flush cutters; file; hallmark stamp; 10mm and 12mm round, flat-topped steel mandrels; block of 2x4 lumber; power drill and ⅜-inch drill bit; steel bench block; brass hammer; bezel burnisher; chain nose pliers; vise

SOLDERING JIG: Clean soldering brick or new, soft Solderite Soldering Block; pencil; flexible shaft with hand piece or Dremel rotary tool; Dremel tapered grinding stone 953 or similar

SOLDERING: 3M™ Multi Gas/Vapor Cartridge/Filter 60926; P100 Respiratory Protection face mask; hand-held Butane torch; tweezers; soldering pick; quenching bowl; pickle; copper tongs

FINISHING: Bench polisher or polishing mandrel; Zam or Fabulustre polishing compound; toothbrush and hot, soapy water; shot-filled tumbler; burnishing compound or Dawn dishwashing liquid

EARRING CARDS: Card stock; high-quality paper cutter; rubber stamps; quick drying, non-smearing ink pad; display rack; paper punch

SOURCES

Most of the tools and materials for this project are available from well-stocked jewelry supply vendors. For stones, check out vendors in our Advertisers' Index (page 77) or visit a gem show. A scrapbooking or hobby store can help you with earring cards. The bezel cups can found at Riogrande.com. Another resource is Interweave's online Cloth Paper Scissors store, interweavestore.com/mixed-media.

Design Start

When you are ready to go into production mode, make sure you have enough components from reliable suppliers and all of the tools on hand.

Design Features

Inexpensive, colorful earrings placed on nature-inspired earring cards as a salute to Northeast Michigan's natural beauty. This product blends in seamlessly with other pieces in my collection.

Create the Soldering Jig

Photo 5 Jigs speed up production. On a clean soldering brick, place a bezel cup near the edge as a template and draw a circle around it in pencil. Repeat, spacing the circles about 1½ inches apart to prevent melting. Insert the small, tapered grinding stone into your Dremel or flexible shaft. Put on a respirator and safety glasses, and cut out a round, flat-bottomed depression on the soldering brick, enlarging the diameter a little. Check the fit until the bezel cup in the hole is flush with the surface.

TIP: A soft-grade Solderite pad allows you to push most components directly into the surface and comes in larger sizes so you can fabricate more earrings at a time.

Soldering

Photo 6 Place a dab of paste solder on the edge and back of the bezel cup.

Photo 7 If you have never used paste solder before, here is a tip: flatten the end of the ear wire with a hammer to improve contact.

Photo 8 As you improve your soldering skills, learn to butt the end of the ear wire directly into the top of the bezel cup for a clean look.

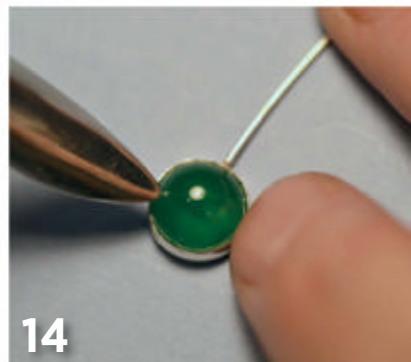
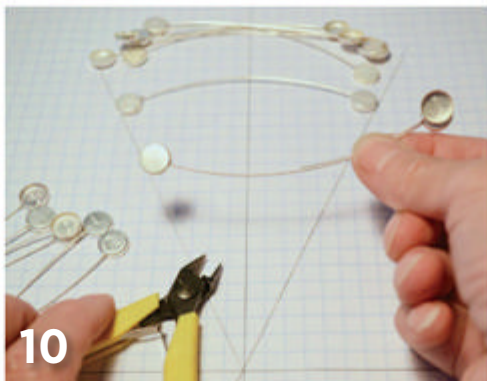
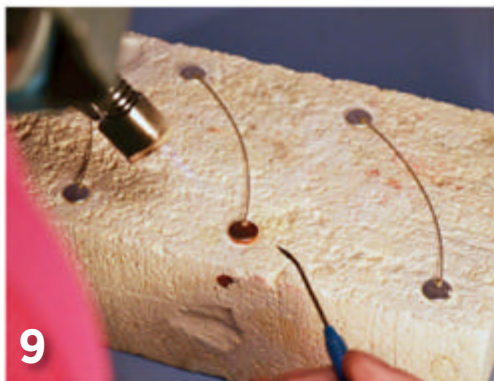
TIP: Paste solder eliminates the need to flux. But the join can break if pitted. Practice a lot on scrap and bend

Design development checklist

THE 10 ESSENTIAL STEPS TO DEVELOPING A PRODUCTION LINE

- 1 Develop a prototype
- 2 Line up components and tools
- 3 Break fabrication down into steps
- 4 Do a test run
- 5 Test market the run
- 6 Streamline
- 7 Keep notes
- 8 Create a production schedule
- 9 Turn on the music and go to work
- 10 Watch and listen as Betsy expands on these steps in her on-demand web seminar, "The Art of Production Jewelry — Making Multiples to Maximize Time & Profits." Order it at <http://bit.ly/lehndorff>.





joins to test strength. If necessary, pickle failed components, add more paste and resolder. And when you are done soldering, recap the syringe and clean out the applicator tip with thin wire.

Photo 9 Put on a respirator, because paste solder contains fluorides. Turn on the exhaust system or open the windows. Align the bezel cups, and solder the ear wires on a soldering jig. Keeping the tip 4 to 5 inches away from the metal, gently brush hot gases from your butane torch over each join until the solder flows. Keep tweezers and a solder pick handy. Quench, pickle, and rinse. Inspect your work.

TIP: Remember that the surface and components on your soldering jig will be hot, so work carefully. Your first earrings may have to soak in pickle for an hour.

Assembly and Stone Setting

Photo 10 Using your flush cutters, snip the earrings in half.

TIP: Make a center finder. Draw a line down the center of a sheet of graph paper, then add two lines at identical angles, like a giant V. By centering the earring component on the V, the center line shows where the cut needs to be made.

Photo 11 Wearing the respirator, round

the ends of the ear wires with an abrasive disk attached to your handpiece. Smooth the solder join between the ear wire and bezel cup if necessary.

Photo 12 Mix equal parts of 330 Epoxy on a piece of cardboard, and use a toothpick to dab a small amount on bottom of bezel cup. Avoid the sides. Press the stone in. Dry for 24 hours.

TIP: Use tiny amounts of glue so you don't have to wipe away the excess.

Photo 13 On your bench pin, use a burnisher to push the bezel cup against the stone. This is the hardest part of this project and can be a challenge. Epoxy is used only to keep the stone from sliding around.

Photo 14 Here's the secret to the final tightening: Use the tip of the burnisher to press directly downward on the thin edge of metal girdling the stone.

Final Finishing

Photo 15 Place a 12mm mandrel in the vise. With the stone facing you, grasp the base of the ear wire above the bezel cup with chain nose pliers and use your fingers to bend the rest toward you at a 90-degree angle. Place the wire against the mandrel, and bend it backward into three-quarter hoop with your fingers. Finish by bending the tail out 90-degrees with the pliers.

Polish, tumble, and sort.



#1 Design Challenge

- Learn through repetition. Look for ways to make this design more efficiently.
- Maintain quality standards despite repetition.



At Armstrong Tool & Supply, Mary Kernahan lays out dozens of her \$10 sterling silver earrings. "I call them my-gum-at-the-checkout-counter earrings," she says, because impulse buyers snap them up at shows.

**see
more
work**
Their Turn
PAGE 8

Packaging

Photo 16 Borrowing from the scrapbooking/papercraft industry, I used a paper cutter to trim card stock into 1 7/8" by 2 7/8" pieces. I stamped each card with my company name and silver wildflowers. (I had to go through several versions before I discovered a foolproof method.) Once the cards were dry, I used a small hole punch to create openings in each card for the ear wires, and added price tags and descriptions — printed on my computer — to the back. The last step was to place earrings in two



8-section display trays from Rio Grande.

Are They Profitable?

These earrings cost me less than \$4 a pair, including tags, and I'm pricing them at \$40. In a gallery or show, 20 pairs would net me a profit of \$360 to \$720 for about eight hours of work — if they sold out. Profits vary depending on gallery commissions and booth fees.

BETSY LEHNDORFF is a silversmith in Northeast Michigan and shows her work at local galleries. She has contributed to *Lapidary Journal Jewelry Artist* since 2010.

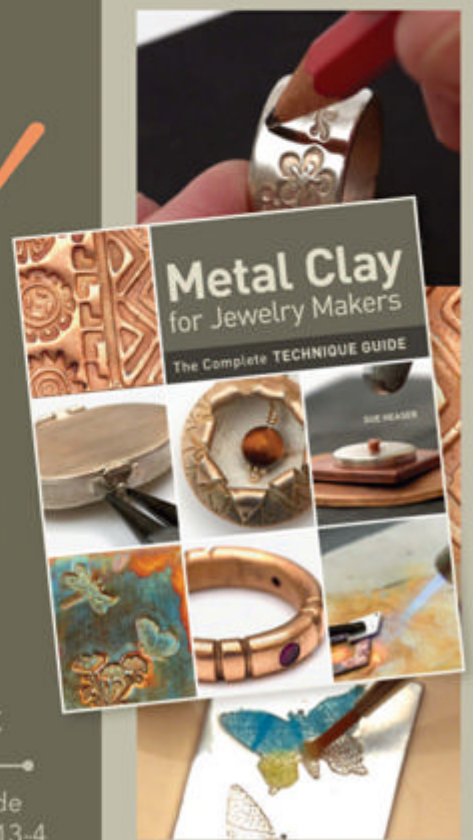
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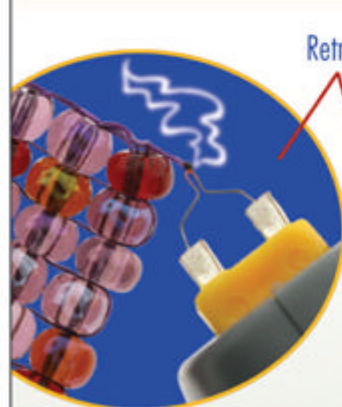


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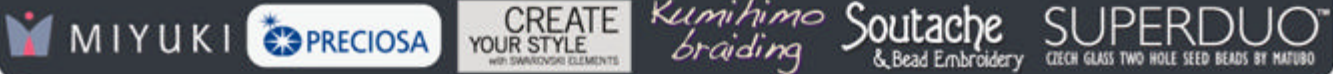
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Resin and Silver Earrings

A colorful pair of earrings with endless variations

BY LAUREL NATHANSON

I AM A HUGE FAN

of techniques and materials that add a splash or, better yet, a tsunami of color to my metalwork. I adapted this pigmented resin technique from the infamous “packing tape technique,” which was invented by . . . well, I don’t know who, but it’s pure genius.

The packing tape technique is to use packing tape as the bottom plate, if you will, for bezels and walled structures. The tape holds the resin in so there is no need to solder, file, and clean up a bottom plate. Plus, this also enables you to have transparency with your resins. Without a bottom plate, you can see through clear and transparent colors.

First, a bit about resin: resin is a two-part liquid plastic. We mix it together in equal parts, and it hardens to rock — hard and crystal clear. It is used often over images, in a bezel with objects embedded in it, or poured into a mold. You can also add different pigments to it to make it different colors. There are special pigments especially for resins, but you can also add acrylic paints, pastels, or my favorite, powdered pigments.

I use Pearl Ex, and they have a bit of iridescence to them. What I love most is that they don’t look obviously plastic-y when you are done. Instead, they look slightly more organic, and I have been told that they look like stone.

In this project, we’ll make earrings, but my technique can also be used to make pendants, rings, and bracelets.

SEE MORE WORK

their turn » PAGE 8

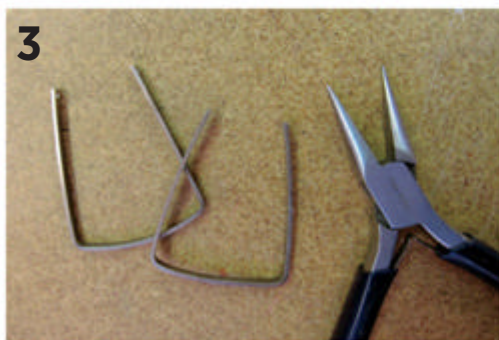


Photo 1 Use a heavy duty wire cutter to cut your silver strips into two 4¼-inch long sections.

Photo 2 Use a centerpunch and a #60 drill bit to create holes on all four ends for the hooks. Use a flat file to round out the ends of the strip.

Photo 3 Anneal the strips. Use a mallet, mandrels, and pliers to form the outside shapes. Measure and cut for the top interior strips. Form, file, and fit the strips into the larger shapes.

Photo 4 Solder in the top strips, using hard solder.

MATERIALS

Ice Resin, including plastic measuring cups and stir sticks
Pearl-Ex pigments
Small wooden stir sticks
2 feet of 4 by 1 mm sterling silver strip
3 inches 20 gauge half hard sterling wire
Packing tape
Wet/dry sandpaper, grits 150, 220, 320 and 400
Liver of Sulfur
Pumice powder

TOOLS

HAND AND FABRICATION:

Ring mandrel; pliers: heavy duty cutters, round nose, chain nose; drill press/flexible shaft; #60 drill bit; center punch; flat hand file

SOLDERING: Soldering setup, including torch, solder, flux, soldering pick, pickle pot

FINISHING: Brass brush

OTHER: Heat gun

SOURCES

Most of the tools and materials for this demo will be available from well-stocked jewelry vendors, many of whom can be found in our Advertisers’ Index, page 77.



Photo 5 Cut, form, and file the remaining strips and continue to solder them into the larger shapes. Use T pins to hold parts together while soldering if necessary. When the soldering is complete and there are no gaps, pickle the earrings clean.

Photo 6 Choose the “bottom” of the earring and sand it — using figure eight motion on 150 wet/dry sandpaper.

Photo 7 The sanding goal is to make the bottoms completely flat and flush.

Cut 2 small pieces of packing tape and adhere it to the bottoms of each earring. I cut away any large amounts of excess tape around the earring so I don’t get stuck to them during the resin process.

Photo 8 Prepare the resin according to the directions. It is essential that you measure the exact same amount

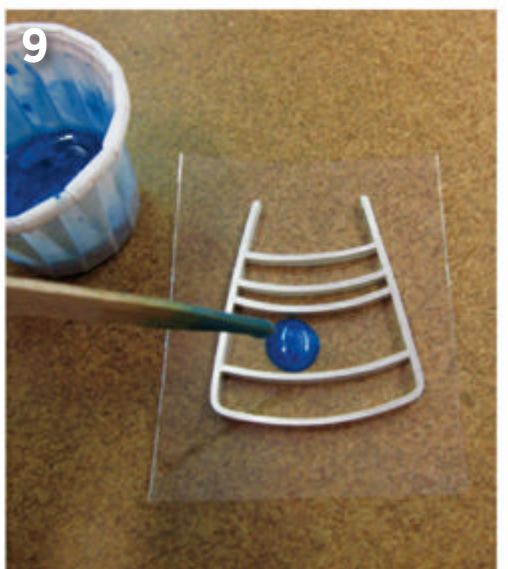


of each part, or else it will never cure properly.

Choose your pigment colors. You can use them straight out of the container, or try mixing different colors together. Pour a small amount of the resin into the mini paper cup, then add a pinch of color to it. The less color, the more transparent, the more color, the more opaque. Don’t add too much pigment however, or else you risk the resin not setting properly.

Photo 9 Use the mini wood sticks or a wire to carefully add the resin to the earring windows, drop by drop. Try to fill all the way to the top, without spilling it over into an adjacent window.

When all of the windows are full, use the heat gun to remove any air bubbles. Set the heat gun on low, and angle it while moving quickly over the



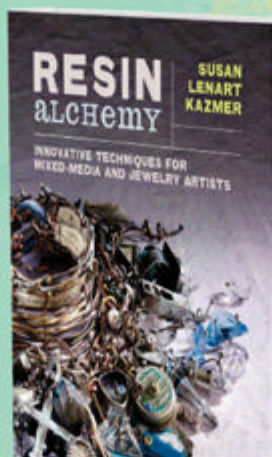
earrings. If you don't have a heat gun, you can blow over the surface to try to release some bubbles.

Let the earrings cure for 24 hours. When they have completely cured, remove the earrings from the tape. The backs will be sticky from the tape. There are several ways to get rid of the stickiness — use Goof Off or nail polish remover and wipe away with a cotton swab, or sand them, using figure 8s on 220 sandpaper. I prefer sanding figure 8s because I like the matte surface that is created from the sanding. Next, do figure 8s on the fronts with 220 sandpaper. Try to make the surface totally flat and smooth. Work your way through 320 and 400 grit paper.

Photo 10 Now we can make the hooks. Using your 20 gauge half hard wire, cut it into 2 pieces $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches long. File the ends smooth and flush. Make a loop on one end with your round nose pliers. Use your needle nose pliers to center the loop on the wire. Use a ring mandrel to form the curves of the ear wires. Open the loops and feed them thru one end of the earring. Use your needle nose pliers to make a small 90 degree bend on the other end of the ear wire. Use a brass brush and soap to clean the earrings in preparation for patina.

Photo 11 Mix Liver of Sulfur patina and submerge the earrings. Leave them in until they go to dark. Use pumice to selectively remove the patina. Leave them as dark or light as you want.

Susan Lenart Kazmer on Resin



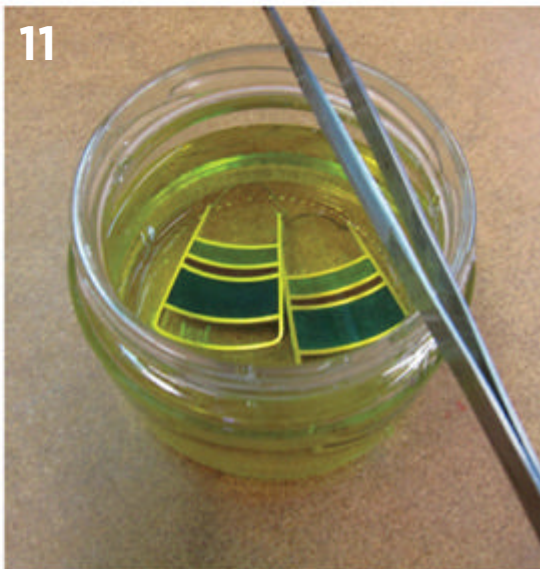
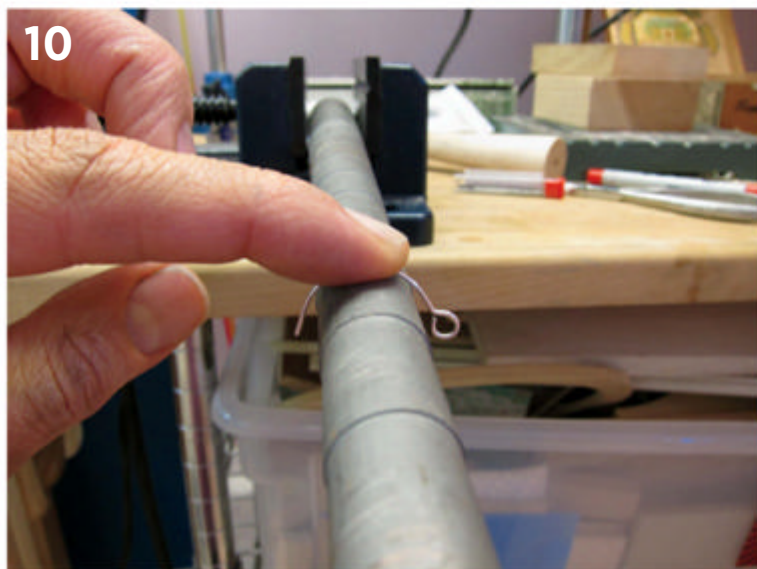
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“When combined with other materials, resin is a substance that transforms them by making them more than they were. It's magical. It can strengthen fragile organic matter that would otherwise deteriorate, such as dried leaves. It can turn ordinary paper into a mysterious and translucent material. Resin can create a beautiful time capsule with words, objects, and other elements suspended within it. Transformation!” — from bestselling artist Susan Lenart Kazmer's book, *Resin Alchemy*

Make sure to remove most of the patina from the hook. Rinse and dry with a soft cloth.

When I am using resin, I usually make multiple pieces at a time to cut back on waste. Because the little plastic containers can only be used once, I try to get the most out of it. Another cool trick I have found is to use the packing tape to remove sticky resin from my fingers.

LAUREL NATHANSON is an artist, jeweler, and high school jewelry shop teacher from Northern California. Her jewelry line, Sugarcoat, combines her roots as a jeweler with her passion for pattern and surface design. You can see more of her work at laurelnathanson.com.



By Deborah Yonick

OPAL *essence*

*adding color, sparkle, and mystery
to jewelry design*

Julie Romanenko

Pendant

Black opal and diamond

PHOTO: COURTESY JUST JULES

**see
more
work**

Their Turn

PAGE 8



“For in them you shall see the living fire of ruby, the glorious purple of the amethyst, the sea-green of the emerald, all glittering together in an incredible mixture of light.” Pliny the Elder, back in the 1st century AD eloquently described what makes opal the most highly prized of all gemstones. Magical, mysterious, full of color, and sparkling with life — opal is captivating new swathes of buyers who are discovering the variety of material available on the market today.

Opals are easy to pair with so many other colors, textures, and moods in fashion that make them a designer favorite. Seductresses of the light, opal boasts unique patterns and organic shapes, too. Its painterly, one-of-a-kind nature makes it ideal for jewelers who are all about color and one-off design.

Throughout history, opal has been regarded as the stone of good fortune, and many who deal in the gem are feeling quite fortunate that sales have been stronger than ever these days. Varieties from black, boulder, and light opal to Mexican fire and Ethiopian opal are showing up in designs gracing the showcases from Place Vendôme in Paris to trendsetting artists like Just Jules, Alishan, and Omi Privé.

JULIE ROMANENKO

Julie Romanenko has fallen for opals, rekindling an old flame for the gem she describes as awe-inspiring. Lately, she has been using mostly black opal in organic shapes, with more of the cool gray background tones, which she pairs with Paraiba tourmaline and rose cut diamonds in pendants and some rings. “Last year I found in Tucson some big opals that inspired me to explore and get really creative — odd, freeform shapes, very organic.” Her diversity in design with opal ranges from Victorian-inspired to tribal. “Opal is the star and tells the story.”

Just Jules, Scottsdale, AZ

justjules.com



Julie Romanenko
Vintage-Inspired
Art Nouveau Ring
Floral and pavé
diamonds with
black opal center



Julie Romanenko
Ring
Black opal and
diamonds

TIP:

Be really careful setting opal, it's very fragile! I bought an expensive piece, big (about 2 inches), dagger shaped, and I cracked it. We ended up cutting it down, and it became a smaller dagger shape. While we made lemonade out of lemons, this long, slender piece lost some of the elegance when we lost some of the stone.

Ethiopian Opal

“Scattered in steep and very rugged canyon country on the eastern edge of the African continent in one of the most prominent rift zones of the world, the precious opals of Ethiopia have been known for at least two decades and recently have begun to create considerable excitement. They have also been eliciting questions: principally, is the material stable, and will supplies last? The short answers appear to be “some is” and “maybe.” — *gem and mineral experts Si and Ann Frazier in Lapidary Journal Jewelry Artist, January/February 2012.*



Find the complete answers to these and other questions about Ethiopian opal in the digital edition of this issue, in which you can also learn to make John Heusler's “Ethiopian Opal Ring,” shown on the cover.

AVAILABLE AT [HTTP://BIT.LY/LJJAOPAL](http://bit.ly/LJJAOPAL).



ALISHAN HALEBIAN

Not one to follow trends, Alishan Halebian came across some nice parcels of beautiful opals four or five years ago, bought them, and put them away, pulling them out recently to make a few pieces that were snatched right up. Now he's using more opal in his collection. "There are no boundaries in working with opal. You can look into it and see a beautiful painting in its splashes of bright color. It's such an exciting stone. You never find one repeating another, and that's what's most attractive." A particular favorite for Alishan is boulder opal for its "grainy" organic texture in gem mixed with matrix. He also is fond of the Ethiopian jelly opal. But he said his love affair with the gem started about 20 years ago with some shell opal he used to design a skirt for a dancer motif.

Alishan, Tustin, CA
Alishanonline.com

TIP:

Opal is a one-of-a-kind stone, very individual, for well-thought out designs where the gem is the priority. Some opals are softer than others and there are also concerns of stability, whether a stone will crack years down the road. Understanding the characteristics of opal is very important to determining what type of opal you want to work with and how you want to use it. You also want to buy from trusted sources that stand behind their merchandise.



Alishan Halebian
Ring
18K yellow gold,
oxidized sterling
silver, diamonds,
2.58ct black
boulder opal
PHOTOS: COURTESY
ALISHAN



Alishan Halebian
Dancer Figure
18K yellow, rose, and
white gold; Mexican
fire opal; carved ebony;
Russian chrome
diopside; diamonds

TIP:

We've found that in Lightning Ridge black opal people tend to like the combination of blues and greens, which have been the most popular with us. But with true collectors looking for special pieces, if the opal displays more red flashes, these are the most sought after and valuable.



Niveet Nagpal

Ring
6.94ct black oval, round
spinel, 18K rose gold
PHOTOS: COURTESY
OMI PRIVÉ



Niveet Nagpal

Ring
9.66ct oval opal,
tsavorite garnets,
brilliant diamond
rounds, platinum, black
rhodium

OMI PRIVÉ NIVEET NAGPAL

"It's very exhilarating designing with opals," says Niveet Nagpal, president Omi Privé. "Each opal is so unique and colorful, revealing different colors from every angle. Pairing opals with multiple colored gemstones and even different metals can contrast with or emphasize specific colors found within the opal." Nagpal recently introduced Australian Lightning Ridge black opals into his jewelry collection. "The Lightning Ridge area of New South Wales produces a very finite supply of this phenomenal stone. We believe this variety of opal is the most beautiful, as well as the most rare and desirable. Our passion at Omi Privé is to create the most spectacular designs possible, while highlighting the rarity and origin of our stones."

Omi Privé, West Covina, CA

omiprive.com

DEBORAH YONICK has been writing about jewelry and fashion trends for more than 20 years for trade and consumer publications and online, and has loved both for much longer! With roots in New York, she presently lives and works in York, PA.



Niveet Nagpal

Three-Stone Ring
4.33ct black opal, trillion
tsavorite garnets, round
sapphires, brilliant diamond
rounds, 18K yellow gold

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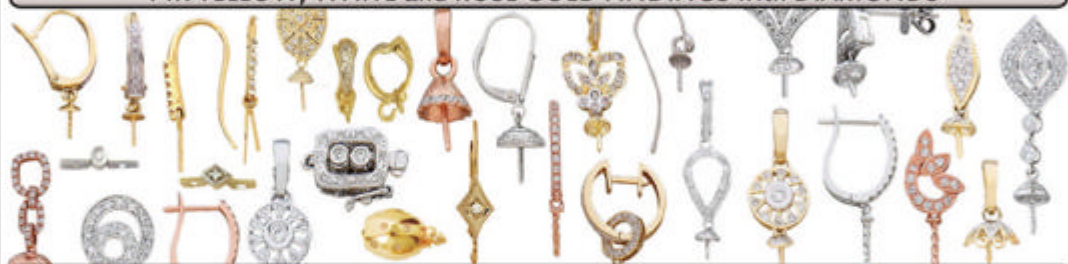
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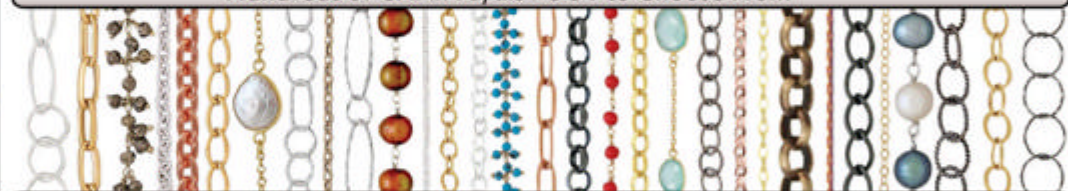
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SKILLS

- Wirework
- Using pliers
- Using wire cutters

TIME IT TOOK

About 10 minutes
per heart



Square Wire Heart Pendant

Create an unusually sculpted wire heart with endless design possibilities

BY LILIAN CHEN

THE IDEA FOR THIS PENDANT comes from an origami paper-folding skill. This technique lets you focus on creation and is like sketching with wire. One unit can be added to or interlocked with another to create a necklace, butterfly pendant, or anything that suits your style. A single piece can be finished within about 10 minutes. I begin by using the wire's original swirls as they come from the spool and by folding the coil into two parts much like the "U" of a paper clip. This kind of wire forming creates tension in the wire and gives it support and more freedom to create wild shapes. One result can be the form of this pendant: an art-style heart shaped from the interlocked "U" shapes. It is a good idea to master the simple heart before proceeding to the advanced version.



Simple Heart

Throughout this project, you'll need to know the basic process of organizing the wire length, forming the heart, locking the wire positions, and hiding the wire ends. Make sure you understand the method for creating a horizontal bend in the wire before you start the project. See "Mastering the horizontal bend" box below.

Photo 1 Cut one full coil of wire from

the spool.

Photo 2 The plier positioning measurements for this heart are $\frac{1}{4}$ coil on the right, $\frac{1}{2}$ coil in the center, and $\frac{1}{4}$ coil on the left as shown in the photo.

Photo 3 Grasp the wire coil at the lower right position ($\frac{1}{4}$ of the total length from the cut end) with the pliers. Move the longer, center section of the wire to form a horizontal "U" bend.

MATERIALS

16 or 18 gauge square Parawire for a pendant

20 gauge square Parawire for earrings

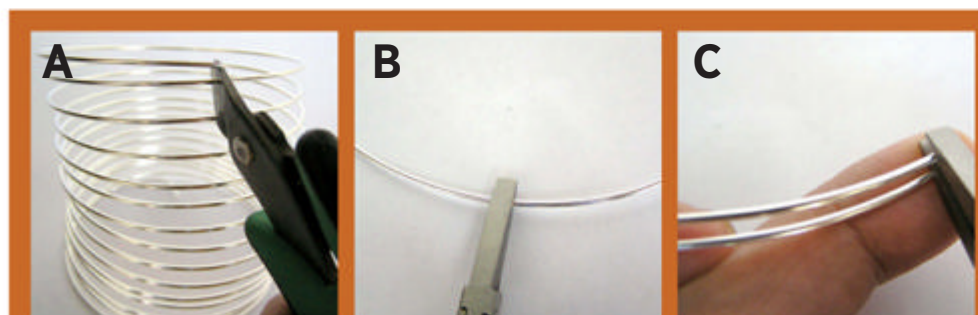
A note on measuring: I start with one coiled piece the diameter of the spool and use the swirls from the spool. We'll work the measurements as fractions of the coil. So the measurements to use for this project are one full coil, a half coil, and a quarter coil. It's easy to figure out the wire length as you create the piece.

TOOLS

Chain nose pliers, round nose pliers, wire cutter

SOURCES

Parawire is available from etsy.com/shop/GoldgatsbyDesign. Most of the tools and materials for this project will be available from well-stocked jewelry supply vendors, many of whom can found in our Advertisers' Index, page 77.



Mastering the Horizontal Bend

PHOTO A Cut one full coil from the wire spool and lay the coil on the table

PHOTO B Grab the wire with the flat nose pliers positioned at the halfway

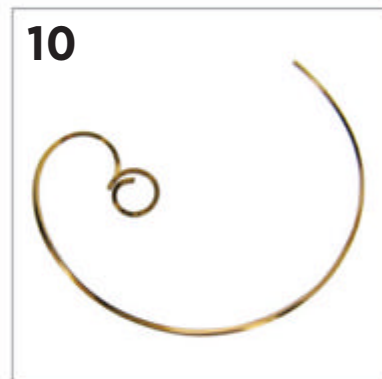
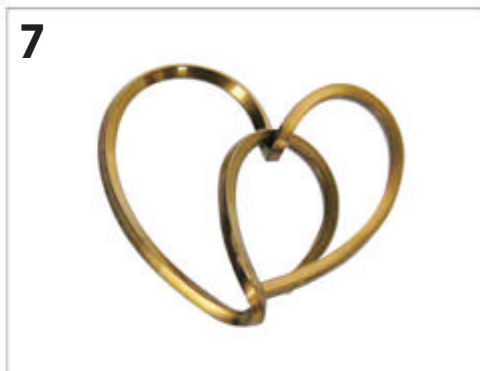
position of the total coil diameter.

PHOTO C Bend the wire upwards by pushing down the left edge of the plier jaw, until the wire stands

up 90 degrees, and then downward from 90 degrees to 180 degrees until the wire forms a perfect "U" with parallel sides once it is laid on a flat surface.

Design Tip

Drawing a sample before you work with the wire to find the central part for your design is essential. Don't straighten the wire! You'll need the original curve as it feeds from the spool. To create a nice "U", I use a horizontal bending position — working horizontal to the coil as it feeds from the spool. The 3D style of this design means you need to focus on the balance of the piece; don't position too much wire on one side of the heart form. To create a nice coil on the wire end, grasp the wire and lead it into a circle shape in the air. Finish the coils one at a time and then cut the ends.



Design Start

I wanted to share one of my new wire forming techniques for creating a 3D wire heart sculpture. The original idea comes from origami. It was specially designed for Valentine's day and for ladies of all ages. But the heart is a universal symbol and can be worn at any time.

Photo 4 Grasp the "U" and hold it vertically with flat nose pliers. With the other hand, move the short tail of the wire on the right to create one half of the heart shape.

Photo 5 Use the existing curve on the longer portion of the wire to form a half circle shape.

Photo 6 Position the pliers $\frac{1}{4}$ of the way in from the other end of the wire to form another horizontally bent "U".

Photo 7 Grasp the end of the last portion of the wire vertically, using the flat nose pliers. With the other hand, hold the "U" and form a loop which will interlock and pass through the initial "U" bend at the top of the heart. Follow the curve, and close the gap by bringing the cut ends together to create the final heart.

Once you can create this simple heart many times, try the advanced version!

Advanced Version

Photo 8 Cut one full coil from the spool. We will work in five sections instead of three. Grasp the wire $\frac{1}{4}$ in from the cut end and form a horizontally bent "U".

Photo 9 Grasp the "U" vertically in the flat nose pliers. With the other hand, hold the wire $\frac{1}{4}$ of the coil away from the "U" bend and create the short tail.

Photo 10 Grasp the end of the short tail with flat nose pliers. With the other hand, grasp the "U" vertically and form the wire into a half heart shape by pushing against the natural curve from the spool. Move the shorter tail portion gently to create half a circle adjacent to the "U", and then continue to move it into a small circle. Cleanly cut the tip of the wire end.

Photo 11 Grasp the wire position at $\frac{1}{2}$ of the coil from the opposite end and form a horizontally bent "U". Move the wire until it lays near the top "U".

Photo 12 Make a horizontal bend just above the top "U".

Photos 13 and 14 Form the other half of the heart by following the natural curve of the wire, then pass over the "U" to position the wire on the other side of the piece.



Design Options

RIGHT

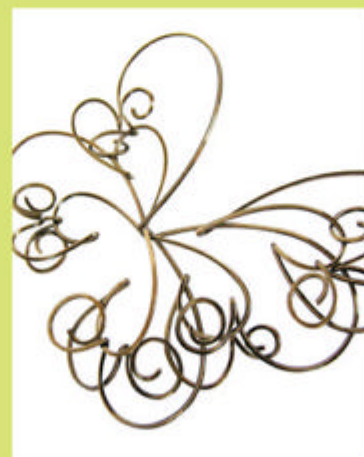
Try multicolor links using different colors of wire.

BELOW, FROM TOP

The links can be embellished with beads or charms strung on the in-progress work before creating the "U" bends.

A multi linked version with a Swarovski Rivoli crystal captured in the wires.

The links can be joined like puzzle pieces.



FIND SUPPLIES!

You can use the hearts in Lilian's design to make your own pendant. Or earrings. Or whatever you'd like. Get the supplies you'll need in the "Square Wire Heart Kit," which includes:

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- 7 feet of 18-gauge Silver-colored square craft wire
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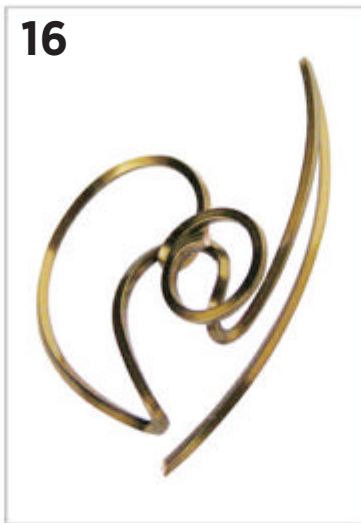
AVAILABLE AT [HTTP://BIT.LY/WIREHEART](http://bit.ly/wireheart).



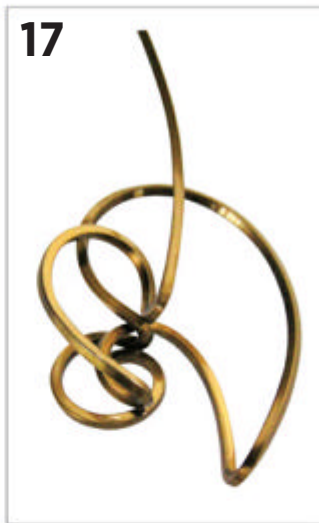
15



16



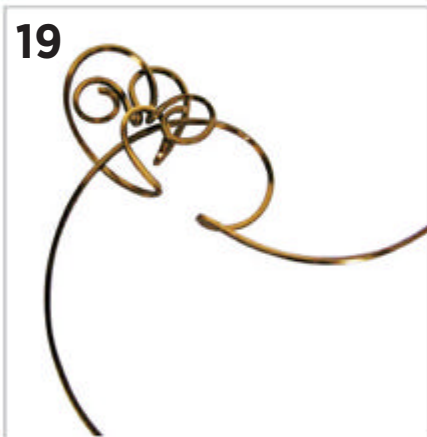
17



18



19



20



21



#1 Design Challenge

This could be a very simple wire pendant just made with one piece of wire, or it can be connected using two pieces of different color wire. A different connection method from mine can be created, or you can add a piece of stone, or make a pendant using the same wire form sculpture. You can challenge yourself and come up with a unique creation of your own.

Photos 15 and 16 Estimate $\frac{1}{4}$ coil from the last bend and form the next horizontally bent "U" at that position.

Photos 17 and 18 Cut the wire at a position $\frac{1}{4}$ of the coil from the "U" that was just made. Form the last section into a circle. Cleanly trim the wire tip at the end.

Joining the Hearts

It is important to be cautious when determining the direction of the wire, especially when creating the horizontal "U". Different bending directions will result in a different shape and style of 3D heart. I suggest using the first "U" as the main center point of the total heart. Everything around that should be centered at the first "U" for balance.

Remember, the basic length for the smaller half of the heart is $\frac{1}{4}$ of the coil.

The remaining half of the heart takes half a coil, but you may change these measurements to add more flourishes to the heart halves.

Photo 19 To form a linked version with the advanced heart, finish one heart and then feed the next link through the finished link after you have created the first horizontal "U" bend in it. Then use both hands to push the wire ends toward each other, holding at the positions where you will form the remaining two horizontal bends.

Photo 20 Here are two links created in different colors.

Photo 21 Here are four links connected at the base of the heart.

LILIAN CHEN is an internationally known 3D Wire sculpture designer, instructor, author, and contributor.



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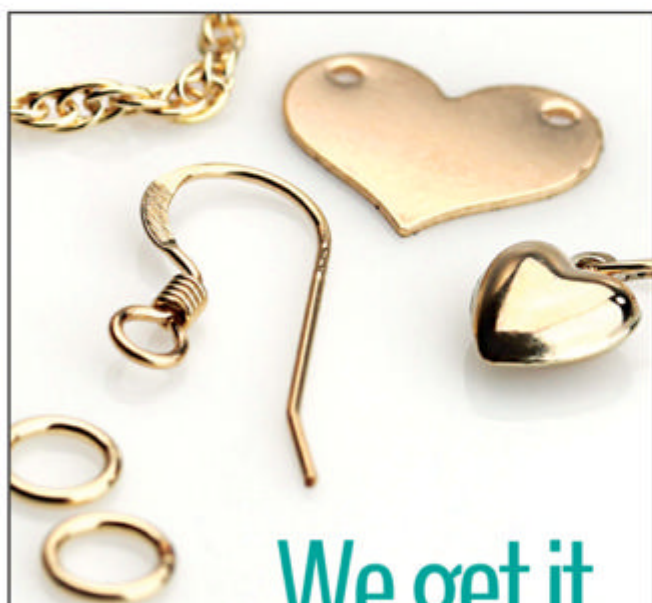
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PHOTOGRAPHING *Gems and Jewelry*

AN INTERVIEW *with*
AZUR MELE McHUGH

BY TERRI HAAG



I have always had a love/hate relationship with photography — I love it, it hates me. At least things got a lot easier and a lot cheaper with digital technology; now if I take 38 pictures of, say, my cat sleeping, and they are *all* terrible, I can delete 38 pictures of my cat sleeping without first shelling out \$217 for film developing. And despite all those millions of deleted Terri's Terrible Photographs to prove the contrary, I, like absolutely everyone else on earth, am convinced that photography is as easy as it looks and that *of course* I can take stunning professional photographs any time I want. (Also that I haven't aged a day and still look 28 years old.)

But the fact is, just as do-it-yourself dentistry may have unforeseen negative consequences, so does do-it-yourself photography. It isn't that you can't take an okay picture (or take out a molar — it's that often an okay photograph will do you more harm than good. Depending on the situation, unprofessional photographic efforts may actually damage your project, not help it.

But when is it okay to do-it-yourself, and when should you call in a pro? We asked Azur Mele McHugh, a young photographer who specializes in taking superb photos of rocks, gems, and jewelry, to provide some pointers.

LJJA: *How is taking pictures of jewelry and gems different from taking pictures of dogs and children?*

AZUR: I think it's surprisingly similar because none of them do what you want them to do when you are taking their photo. But at least with children and dogs, they have animated personalities that you can catch if you take enough photos. With jewelry or rocks, you have to find the personality of the piece and then struggle to bring it to life.

LJJA: *How many shots do you typically take of something to get one or two good ones?*

AZUR: I strive for five good shots per piece. I would say that, once I get my light to play nice and we have the background in order, I take roughly 40-75 shots per piece. It depends on how complicated the work is. Sometimes I will take 150-200 shots of just one piece because it has that many shots to give. In that case, the piece has so many different looks that work and each angle or detail leads you to the next shot that is even more interesting than the last. With other pieces, I may get the best shot right out of the gate and the next 30 shots get progressively worse.

LJJA: *Many older readers and jewelers (and writers, for that matter) are still stuck in a mental box full of yellow metal canisters of film and paper packets from Walgreens full of largely useless snapshots. How is the new world of photography different from this old world?*

AZUR: [Laughing] Now we have computers that are 10



times as full of useless shots. We have the ability to make changes to images so easily that the brainstorming behind the shoot has changed. A lot of my images are manipulated shots "stitched" together to make one cohesive, collected piece. This way, I can move the lighting and angles to bring out the best of the piece, backgrounds and details.

LJJA: *Your father, Zee Haag, is a famous guy in the rock and gems business. Is there anything he taught you (never accept candy from strangers, always signal before changing lanes) that has been really useful when photographing stones and jewels?*

AZUR: I think one of the biggest things is KISS — Keep It Simple Stupid. He refers to that phrase for business in general, but it is something that I always try to keep in mind when photographing jewelry. It's easy to over-think and further complicate the shot when you are already working so hard with your lights, surfaces, and backgrounds, making sure you're catching the right angle — while balancing the concept of the artist and the feel of the shoot. For example,

“Interesting work makes for interesting photos. If the jewelry or art or gems aren’t good in the first place, the photos have to work really hard to be mediocre.”

Wei Lah Poh
Blur Brooch



I was working on personal project to promote our cabochons. I had this brilliant idea to make a set that looked like a candy shop, using the stones as the candy with glassware and candy wrappers. The photos in my head were going to be witty and eye-catching, making the stones look yummy. The reality (six hours later) was 2,000 images where the glassware was stealing your attention, or the stones looked crowded and awkward. The set was messy and too big, the stones were too uniform and small. I left everything in place and went to bed. The next day, I tried again — one stone at a time in very tight shots with only one other element added to the frame besides the stone. That is how the “Gaspeite with Lime Mohawk” image was made.

LJJA: *Did you always want to be a photographer? What were other early career choices? (For instance, your sister wanted to be an “Ice-Capader” at one point.)*

AZUR: Hmm well... I wanted to be a dog when I was 5.

LJJA: *Why is hiring a professional to take high-quality images of your work often the only way to go? Or is it?*

AZUR: Photography is and always will be an art, and professionals have mastered the technical aspects of lighting and camera to focus on making a great photo. When you have to really think depth of field, ISO, shutter speeds, back light, light flare, and all the other things that it takes to make a photo a photo, you don’t have the ability to concentration on the important things that make great jewelry look as great as it is. With your thoughts occupied on the technical details of how a camera works it can be

difficult to remember you want the images to be “organic and fresh” or “raw and crisp” or “dramatic and kind of racy.”

LJJA: *What are the worst stones or objects to photograph. Why?*

AZUR: Pearls are really difficult because, no matter what you do, there is always a black spot right in the center of the pearl on your camera lens.

In fact, anything with a smooth shiny surface is going to fight you, and you’ll need to play with the refraction. You can’t have weird black spots showing up on your rings, but you don’t want them to be perfectly white and clean either or they lose their shape and depth.

I am not a fan of shooting for a production line. Consistency is my biggest obstacle because I try to make each photo better than the last which means, if I stumble onto something that I think would make the photo better, I want to head in that direction. But if all the photos require the work to be at the same level, with the same dimensions and same lighting so they work on a website, say, or within a brand, you can’t vary from that.

LJJA: *What do you like working with the best?*

AZUR: Interesting work makes for interesting photos. If the jewelry or art or gems aren’t good in the first place, the photos have to work really hard to be mediocre. I like shooting jewelry that is engaging and unfamiliar. If I have the chance to experiment and develop an image around the concept of the artist, that makes me happy.

LJJA: *Why is the background important?*

AZUR: Different materials look awesome or horrible depending on the background. It is also usually the only other element in the photo, so it is going to set the mood and hopefully draw you into the image. You want a background that is interesting but not distracting.

LJJA: *We always see photographers with those umbrella things and light meters. How important is lighting, really?*

AZUR: Lighting is absolutely everything. Not only is it essential to make a technically correct photograph, but lighting is what makes an image compelling. I use both studio lights and natural light, but the type of lighting makes a big difference in the look of the images. Photography is all about manipulating light to create what you want to capture.

LJJA: *How do you light objects to get these amazing results?*

AZUR: You have to let the object dictate the shot. For instance, when I work with an unfamiliar material, I don't know how my lighting is going to react with the piece. I have to analyze both the light and the piece. My best advice for lighting is don't set up three lights when all you need is one. Start slow and add lights or reflectors as needed.

LJJA: *How do you know when you have it right?*

AZUR: I don't always know until I look through the lens. I experiment a lot with personal shoots or with clients who have a lot of flexibility. Mostly it's experience; I've made a lot of bad photos messing with light and objects. Out of those bad shoots I learned something that I can incorporate into future shoots to make distinctive and striking images.

LJJA: *How do you make rings stick up like that and not fall over?*



AZUR: Dental wax, which you can get at any drugstore, and some Photoshop cleanup.

LJJA: *Speaking of which, how much do you do with Photoshop? Is it important to the end result?*

AZUR: I use Photoshop on every image. I moonlight as a photo retoucher, so I do have some skills in that department. [Author's note: Azur also teaches Photoshop techniques on YouTube.] You can take a nice photo, but if there is a little bit of dust on the work or uneven light in the background, it makes the image look careless and messy. A lot of the time, I can't even see dust until the photos are on the computer. My favorite is when the light catches a *dog hair* that you swear was not there when you took the picture, but now you have a diamond and fido fur bracelet for sale.



ABOVE
Lisa Mele
Tahitian Pearl with
Diamonds and
Sapphire

LEFT
Lisa Mele
Turquoise and Gold
Vermeil Bullets

**see
more
work**
Their Turn
PAGE 8

Also, I take a lot of my photos so that they can fit together in Photoshop after the fact. I light the piece in different ways to bring out some elements and push back others, then I light the background, take extra photos of the areas, and combine 20 images into one.

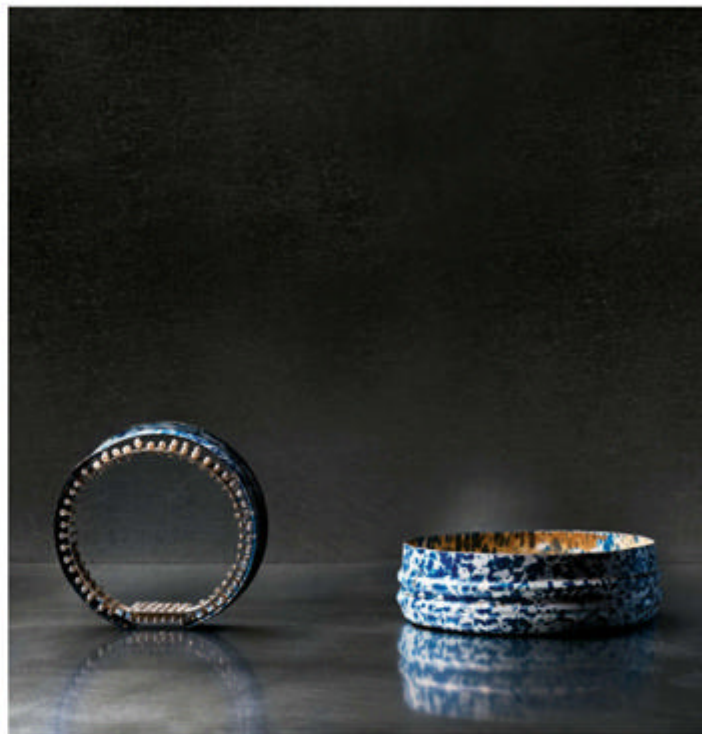
LJJA: *Everybody on earth secretly thinks they can take pictures as well as any professional. Are they wrong? Why?*

AZUR: I think that illusion is quickly shattered if you just try to mimic your favorite photo. Even the best photographer has a hard time with that. A lot of the “magic” in photography comes from capturing something the photographer sees that the person standing next to him or her does not.

Aside from the creative side of things, there is a ton of equipment and software that comes with professional photography and a lot of boring technical knowledge that the software and equipment require. For instance, speaking just about post processing, after the photos are done and they are on your computer, do you have the right software to look though all of your images and make a proper edit? This is something that takes a lot of time and is *way* harder than people think. Also, do you have the proper software to view RAW files? If the files are being printed, do you have a monitor that is calibrated so you know the true colors of the photos? Can you process your images to their proper color space for web vs. printing a business card? Do you have space to keep all these image on your computer? Trust me, the day you throw them away is the day you will need them for something new.

LJJA: *Is anybody “a natural” at this, or is it all hard work and trial-and-error?*

AZUR: There is obviously an advantage if you have an



“eye” for photography, but I also think building that “eye” comes from trial and error. Plus the drive to continue forward knowing how many errors you’ve made already and how many more are coming your way makes the road rockier for some than for others.

Unfortunately, taking photos of jewelry is one of the most frustrating and infuriating experiences you can undertake in this business. If you look around the commercial photography dash board sites, you will see very little jewelry. Tons of food, bags, and shoes in the



Learn More



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EASY JEWELRY
PHOTOGRAPHY

Zee's Minerals
TaTa Amethyst Rough

“Lighting is what makes an image compelling. I use both studio lights and natural light, but the type of lighting makes a big difference in the look of the images. Photography is all about manipulating light to create what you want to capture.”



product sections but jewelry is scarce. Luckily, I started photographing jewelry in high school for my mother (jewelry artist Lisa Mele), so I have had lots and lots and lots of practice. It took me a very long time to decide that I enjoyed the challenge of jewelry photography, because at first it was an unpleasant chore that needed to be done as quickly as possible — which usually meant it would take me a few days to shoot nice photos of just a few items.

LJJA: *Speaking of, what course or projects at RISD (the Rhode Island School of Design) made the biggest difference when doing this kind of specialist work?*

AZUR: I spent my entire first year at RISD either covered in charcoal from sketching groups of naked people or in a lecture hall listening to different professors speak about every form of art from cave drawings, to baroque architecture, to Jeff Koons. RISD is very concept-driven and heavy on fine art. I learned how to research, develop, and refine a conceptional theory and then create a visual representation that supported that concept. I believe the visual representation should be eye candy, which is something RISD and I didn't always see eye to eye on. A lot of the photos I take when it comes to jewelry and rocks are to sell something. Unfortunately, a lot of the time, it isn't about getting the most artistic and satisfying image; it's about getting the best image possible to showcase the thing you are trying to sell, then sell it quickly and well.

LJJA: *What is your best advice for the jewelers or dealers who still want to take their own images?*

AZUR: Play (happy photographers take the best photos), keep it simple, and invest in a good lens.



ABOVE
Wei Lah Poh
Enamel Wear

LEFT
AZURZ Rocks and Minerals
Gaspéite Lime Mohawk

LJJA: *Can you list some of the most important things you think about when you are taking or Photoshopping your own images?*

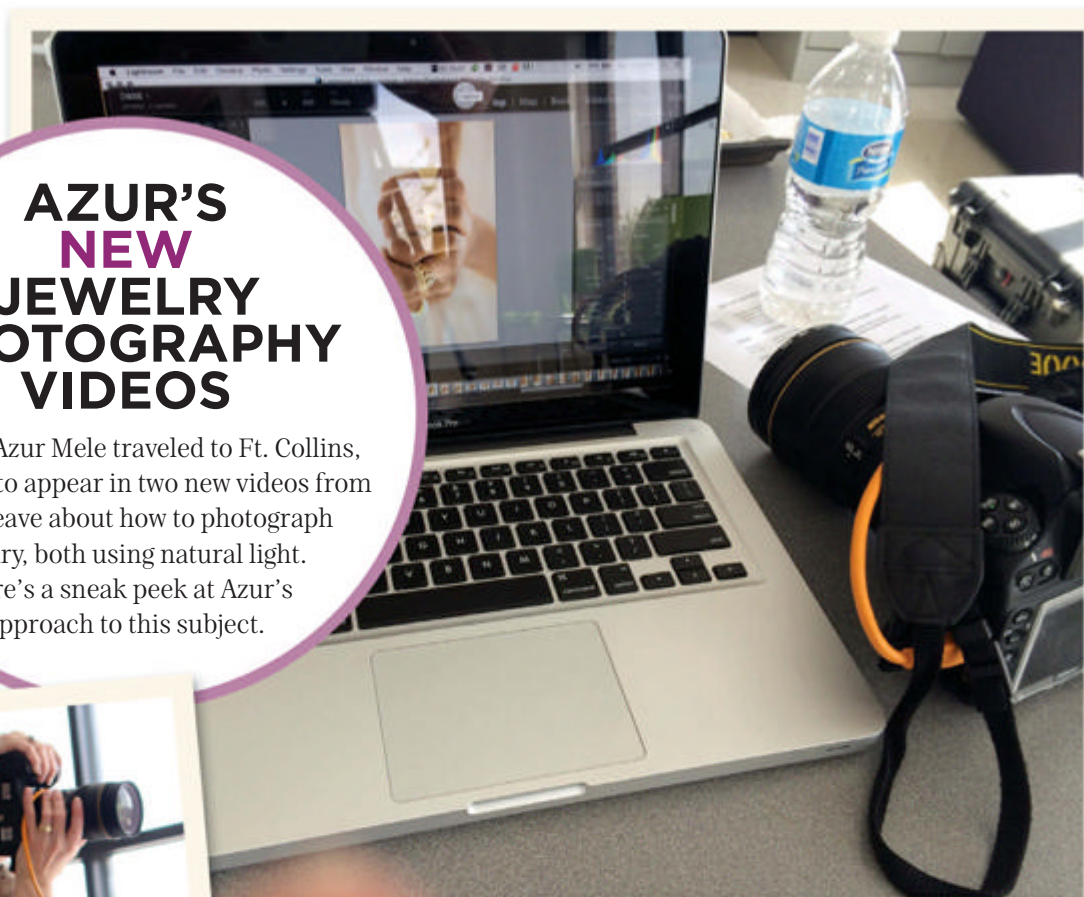
AZUR: Pay attention to your reflections. Get a good macro lens. It's important to be able to get close enough to your work. When Photoshopping, be sure to use layers and masks so you can go back if you mess up!

TERRI HAAG is a freelance writer based in Tucson, Arizona. She has been a frequent contributor to this magazine since the 1990s.

AZUR'S NEW JEWELRY PHOTOGRAPHY VIDEOS

In April, Azur Mele traveled to Ft. Collins, Colorado, to appear in two new videos from Interweave about how to photograph jewelry, both using natural light.

Here's a sneak peek at Azur's approach to this subject.



LJJA: Not to seem insensitive, but you seem young to be giving master classes in photography. Doesn't this take years to . . . well . . . master?

AZUR: It has taken years. I started taking pictures in my very early teens, specialized in photography in high school, meaning four years of classes during which I basically lived in the darkroom, then five years of University classes at RISD in photography, plus almost three years of working in the field. But having said that, I'm constantly learning new techniques. Experimentation is everything for me because you can't learn it all from one place or one person. No one can teach you exactly what to do in a situation that hasn't even come up yet.

LJJA: Sounds like hard work.

AZUR: It is, but if you don't understand the not-fun stuff, such as shutter-speeds and how light is reflected from backgrounds and how to use the aperture, it can be very frustrating. And you can do everything by the book but the stone still looks absolutely terrible and nothing like it

does in reality. Then you have to throw that book away and experiment with something new.

LJJA: If it's all about experimenting anyway, why should people buy your video?

AZUR: Before they can start experimenting, all photographers need a basic technical understanding or they are going to have to learn to build their first wheel alone, while the rest of us drive off in very quick cars. So I teach cool professional techniques and tricks and give them permission to experiment. With digital, you can take as many pictures as the camera will hold, find the good ones, and dump the rest. Just remember what you did in that cool photo so you can do it again.

LJJA: You are big on natural light. Why?

AZUR: Because it's alive. Well, not alive, but it changes depending on where you are and time of day, and what you're shooting. The light on a sunny day in April in Nevada is different than the light on a sunny day in

April in the Alps — which are both different on a sunny day in October in the same places. There are so many variables: humidity, elevation, the season, time of day, clouds — which is why pros invest thousands of dollars in studio lights. We need to get exactly the same lighting conditions every time. Pros need complete control. Unfortunately, you can lose the happy accidents that way. The point is that my viewers don't need studio equipment; they need to be able to make natural light work for them.

LJJA: And live models?

AZUR: Models add a whole level of complexity but, when done right, are worth it. There are things a model tells the viewer about the jewelry that a still life image can't. All kinds of obvious and subliminal messages are sent and received.

If I'm shooting an elegant platinum and diamond collar worth a hundred grand, I don't want a model in a Boho skirt and tank top. While it's fun to juxtapose expectations once in a while, generally the company selling hundred grand necklaces isn't pitching them to Boho girls in Birkenstocks. The people who buy those necklaces have a very different self image. A good photographer needs to enhance the self-image of the buyer. This kind of photography can be arty, but it's not about art, it's about selling your or your client's jewelry. Big difference.

LJJA: Who picks the model, you or the client?

AZUR: Me. Some clients want me to use their beautiful niece, and I have to explain that yes, she's gorgeous, but a professional model does it for a living. So no. Models know how to move for jewelry — which is different than for fashion — know how to showcase the piece, and can keep themselves out of the picture, so to speak. Good models can be costly, but not as costly as shooting a whole campaign, doing all the post-production, launching it, and then having it flop.

When I do a serious shoot, I hire a model and a stylist, because I'm not a good stylist. I get some funky idea and run with it and later see it just didn't work. I used to try to tell the stylist,

WATCH NOW

How to Shoot Jewelry and Gemstones in Natural Light with Azur Mele

Available now at <http://bit.ly/azurlight>.

How to Shoot Jewelry and Gemstones on Models in Natural Light with Azur Mele

Available now at <http://bit.ly/azurmodel>.



"Put her in that dress and do this make-up," and the stylist would say, "No." And of course she would be right. I had to learn to trust my team.

LJJA: So you explain these concepts in these videos?

AZUR: In the second video, I go through all this so viewers see what I'm doing and why, and then they can apply those techniques to their own work.

LJJA: What do you want your viewers to get out of these videos at the end of the day?

AZUR: Instantly useable techniques, tricks, and ideas, and especially the confidence to take those techniques and tricks and apply them to new situations. But mostly, I want to help them generate great visual and financial results. I want my viewers to make themselves and their products look good, but the best results are better jewelry sales!





SUPPLIES

1 sheet of slightly transparent paper that's thicker than tracing paper

2+ sheets of smooth clean paper such as fine art Bristol paper

Tape

SOURCES

Transparent paper is available at Michael's and other craft stores. Fine art Bristol paper is available at art supply stores.

Easy Jewelry Photography

how to shoot rings and earrings **BY AZUR MELE**

more from
azur mele



**PHOTOGRAPHING
GEMS AND
JEWELRY**

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ANYONE WHO MAKES

and sells jewelry knows how hard it can be to take professional-looking photos of your pieces. And good images are vital to presenting your jewelry for sale. But getting your images just right can be very difficult if you're an amateur photographer. Shooting rings and earrings can be particularly hard. But here is a simple method for getting great shots every time.

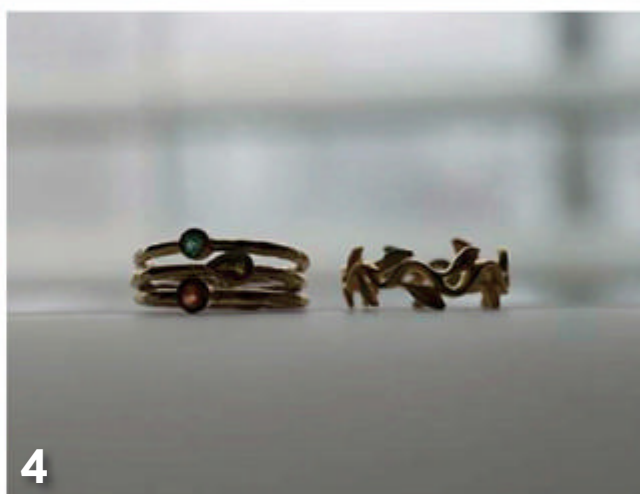
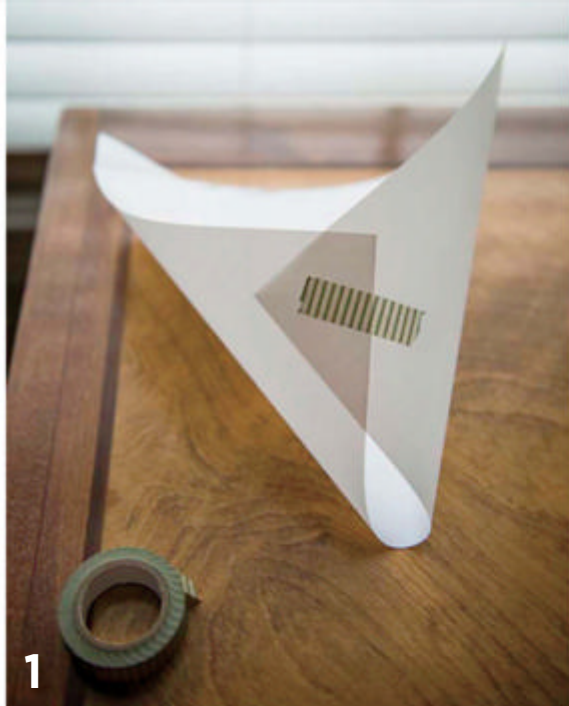


Photo 1 Use the slightly transparent paper and tape and make a “cone” with a small top and large base.

Photo 2 Set up your scene in front of a window with good natural light. Place one sheet of the opaque white paper as the “floor.”

Photo 3 Place your cone with the large opening facing you so it is back-lit by the window. The cone will soften the light and wrap white around your pieces. Set up your camera on a tripod. Lower your camera so you are level with the piece you are photographing.

Adjust the cone so you see the white reflections of the paper on the rings. If you see black areas on the rings, make the cone tighter so there is more white wrapping. The further in front of the rings the paper comes, the cleaner the metal will look. Adjust your camera’s setting for your available light, creating the best exposure for the rings.

Photo 4 This is a view of rings, setup from the camera angle. Make sure to use a tripod. Your available light will most likely be low so you will need to be able to have your camera steady and still so you can use a very slow shutter speed.

WATCH MORE FROM AZUR



How to Shoot Jewelry and Gemstones in Natural Light with Azur Mele

Available now at <http://bit.ly/azurlight>.

How to Shoot Jewelry and Gemstones on Models in Natural Light with Azur Mele

Available now at <http://bit.ly/azurmodel>.

5



6



7



8



9



10



Photo 5 Here's an image of the setup without the cone. Take your photos. If you want to "blow out" your background and create a composite shot in Photoshop, be careful not to move the camera.

Photo 6 Take two separate shots. Use the cone with the following settings: 70MM; ISO 100; $\frac{1}{50}$ sec @ f 5.6. Then take a shot using the following settings: 50MM; ISO 100; $\frac{1}{15}$ sec @ f/ 5.6.

Photo 7 Here's the composite final image — with a little Photoshop magic.

Photo 8 For earrings, I use string and tape a small section of string on the inside of the cone to create a place to hang the earrings. Once you have fought the earrings into position (which is not the easiest task), set your camera on the tripod.

Photo 9 Adjust the cone so you see the white reflection wrapping onto the earrings. If you see black areas on the metal, make the cone tighter so there is more wrap.

Photo 10 I used these settings: 50MM; ISO 100; $\frac{1}{200}$ sec @ f/ 2.8. Here's the final image after some adjustment with Photoshop.

AZUR MELE is a professional photographer from Arizona with a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design. She left the desert to pursue a career in fashion and jewelry-oriented photography. She now resides in Rhode Island with her husband Jesse and their son Miles. See more of her work at azurmele.com.

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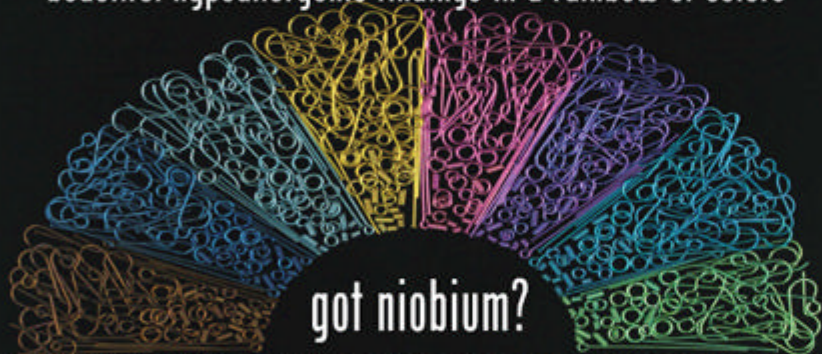
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New at Buying Lapidary Rough?

10 questions to ask yourself if you'd like
to cut your own stones

BY JEFF FULKERSON



I'm a metalsmith, and I like making jewelry. And I like setting stones in that jewelry. So why am I telling you how to buy rocks? As I've progressed in my jewelry-making odyssey, I've found that sometimes I get an idea for a piece which requires a certain stone, which I would then have to go out and try to find. This, my friends, is not always an easy task. I used to go out and look for cabochons to use in my jewelry, but the problem with that was I was always constrained by what someone else had created. It was not always easy to find a stone that would work in my design. If only there were some way that I could locate a stone to fit into my design. Sound familiar?

Once you get to that point, the next natural step is to look into cutting your own stones. For most of us that means going to our local gem & mineral society (San Diego Mineral & Gem Society in my case) and taking a lapidary class. Once you do this, it opens up a whole new world! It didn't take me too long to figure out that it is *way* cheaper to buy uncut rough as opposed to buying cabochons someone else has cut.

When you do take a lapidary class, they'll inevitably have a bunch of slabs of some inexpensive stone — usually jasper or agate — that you can use to practice your newfound skills. But, if you plan to continue cutting, there comes a time when you must procure your own material. That means either taking a field trip into the desert to look for rocks (they all look the same to me) or going to a local gem show. You can also go to Quartzsite, or to the Granddaddy of them all, the infamous gem shows in Tucson. But before you do, it's wise to have a plan. Here are some questions to answer before you go.

1 What am I looking for?

When you start out looking at rough, the first thing that becomes apparent is that there certainly is a lot of it! It comes in all shapes, colors, and sizes. It can overwhelm you, or you can look at it like a treasure hunt. So the first question you must ask yourself is, "What am I looking for?" Do you want just any rough material so that you can continue on with your cabbings, or are you looking for a specific material that you can't live without? (This seems to happen to me on a regular basis.)

2 How much do I want to buy?

Do you want to buy it by the kilo, the pound, or by the slab? Usually, the more you buy, and the bigger or rougher it is, the cheaper the price.



3 Will this material be appropriate for my work?

As I said, I'm a jeweler, not a geologist. Basically, I like pretty rocks. But I've learned a few things along the way. Another question to answer is "what is the hardness and durability of the stone" you'll be buying, as this makes a big difference when you're cutting your rough. Because I like doing inlay, I don't need very much material, and I like rough that has a hardness of 4 to 6, with a little leeway on both ends. You'll find that the more you work with a specific material, the more familiar you will become with it and you will start to know what to look for and what to watch out for.

4 What is the "right" price to pay?

Something you will notice when shopping for rough is that prices for the same material can vary widely. I recommend looking at a lot of different vendors to get a feel for what a particular material should cost. This may sound daunting, but if you start at a smaller, local show you can make two or three trips around the entire venue to find out how much everyone is charging for what. At that point, you should be able to make an informed decision on what to buy from whom and how much to pay for it.

5 Do I really want to cut this myself?

As you try cutting and polishing different stones, you'll start to have favorites. I like jasper

**CLOCKWISE
FROM RIGHT**

Jeff Fulkerson's finished inlaid psilomelane ring, or as he calls it, "the weapon."

Many dealers have lots of slabs to choose from, and usually display them in water so you can see how they might polish up.

This stone looked good on the outside, but crumbly and porous on the inside.



more than agate because jasper is softer. I love turquoise and I love fossilized dinosaur bone, even though it's basically agate. You'll probably also have your not-so-favorites. I really like the subtle look of psilomelane, so a few years back I went on the hunt for some rough. I had a ring design that I wanted to make, and I just had to have psilomelane. I finally found a likely looking piece and bought it. The ring came out stunning, but I'll never cut another piece of psilomelane as long as I live. Why? It's the hardest and dirtiest stone I've ever cut. As far as I'm concerned, if I need another piece, I'll gladly pay someone else to cut it!

6

What am I really getting?

If you just buy a rock, it might be gem-quality on the inside, and it might not. You won't know until you cut into it. Last year at

Quartzsite, I bought a big hunk (that's a technical lapidary term that we don't have time to get into) of fossilized dinosaur bone. I couldn't wait to get it home. When I first cut into it, it just sort of crumbled. It turned out to be just a poor-quality, drab gray rock. In other words, I just bought a very expensive paperweight. It looked good on the outside, but it sure didn't on the inside. And to think, some poor dinosaur gave his or her life for that rock. But I digress.

On the other hand, last year in Tucson, I bought a fist-sized piece of boulder opal rough. With opal rough, the opal runs in seams in the host rock. The dilemma with this type of material is how deep does the seam run? If it runs deep and wide, you could have a real find. If not . . . another paperweight. When I got my boulder opal home and cut into it, it was amazing. I got ten beautiful cabs out of that one piece, more than recouping my costs.

7

Can my friends' experience help me make better decisions?

8

Is there another option to "hunks?"

Many dealers slab their rough, so you can really see what you're getting. Others will take a large piece of rough and cut it in half to expose the center. This takes a lot of guess work out of the process, as you can see exactly what you're buying. Of course, you will pay more, but it can be worth it to know exactly what you're buying. I sometimes buy slabs because inlay doesn't require that much material and I can see pretty much what the stone will produce. That said, I would stay away from slabs that have been polished on one side. If you want a specimen to display, that's fine, but if you're just going to just cut it up, why pay for the polish? But I do have a friend who does almost nothing but inlay work and only buys finished cabs, because he knows exactly what the stone looks like when it's polished, and he has much less waste. Of course, he's paying a premium for that knowledge, but he feels it's worth it.

9

How can I take a closer look at a specific rock?

This brings us to another problem with

buying rough — looking for cracks or fissures. Many dealers have spray bottles lying around on the big rock piles. Why? Remember these words: water is your friend. With some rocks, like lapis, finding cracks is easy. Just wet the rock, wipe it off, and blow on it. The surface will dry off, but if there is a seam or crack, it will show right up by remaining wet. But just because a rock has a crack in it doesn't make it unusable. However, you do have to take the crack into account. Can you cut around it? Can you get the size piece out of it that you need?

Because I like doing inlay,
I don't need very much
material, and I like rough that
has a hardness of 4 to 6, with a
little leeway on both ends.

10

Am I willing to take the risk on this particular rock?

This year in Tucson, I bought some boulder opal rough and some ribbon turquoise. Both materials were relatively inexpensive, and both are, in my opinion, a crap-shoot. (Another technical term.) And that's precisely what I like about these materials. I might end up with hundreds of dollars' worth of finished material, or a couple of interesting paperweights. So in this case, I chose to see buying rough as a treasure hunt. You never really know what you're going to get. It can be boom or bust. And there was only one way to find out. When I cut into the first piece of ribbon turquoise, I got some nice slabs and I will get some more nice cabs out of it. When I cut into the second, BAM! The seam opened up and was a nice blue. I'll get some of the best cabs out of this piece that I've ever gotten from ribbon turquoise rough. So I hit the jackpot.

While it might sound like there is nothing but problems with buying rough material, I think the good far outweighs the bad. First off, it's really fun. As I said, I think of it as a treasure hunt. With some rough, you will discover that

DO YOU LIKE INLAY?

Let Jeff Fulkerson teach you how in his video, "Beginning Inlay."

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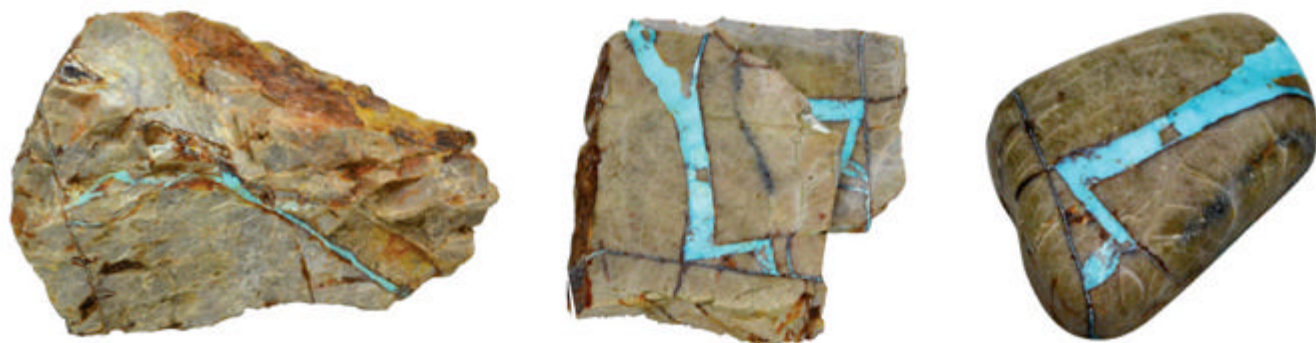


Try this amazing inlaid cuff by Jeff Fulkerson.

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its beauty is only skin deep. And with some rocks, you'll find you can't judge a book by its cover. Also, you will pay a lot less for a lot more material. Some of it won't pan out, but if you're careful, and as you get more experience, the majority of what you purchase will more than make up for what you initially paid and any material that doesn't pan out. Just remember when you go out shopping for lapidary rough to decide what you're looking for and how much you want to buy. Look over the piece carefully to determine if there are any seams or cracks that you will have to take into account before you start cutting into it, and determine if the pattern goes through the stone. And finally, have fun on your treasure hunt.

JEFF FULKERSON has been creating imaginative jewelry for 30+ years and has taught at museums, schools, and events. The award-winning silversmith has studied such Native American greats as Richard Tsosie, Jesse Monongye, and Michael Cheatham. Noted for his meticulous execution and attention to detail, Jeff loves the creative process of seeing his ideas take shape and come to life. See more at aldenjeffriesdesign.com.



FROM LEFT Ribbon turquoise. Jeff bought this because the turquoise seam was very blue, and he hoped to get one or two cabs out of it; The ribbon turquoise got even better with the next cuts!; From rough to slab to polished cabochon — beautiful and interesting, a real find.

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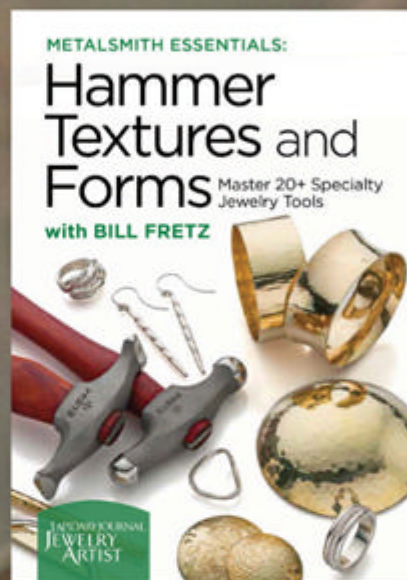
TEXTURE & FORM

jewelry

with Bill Fretz

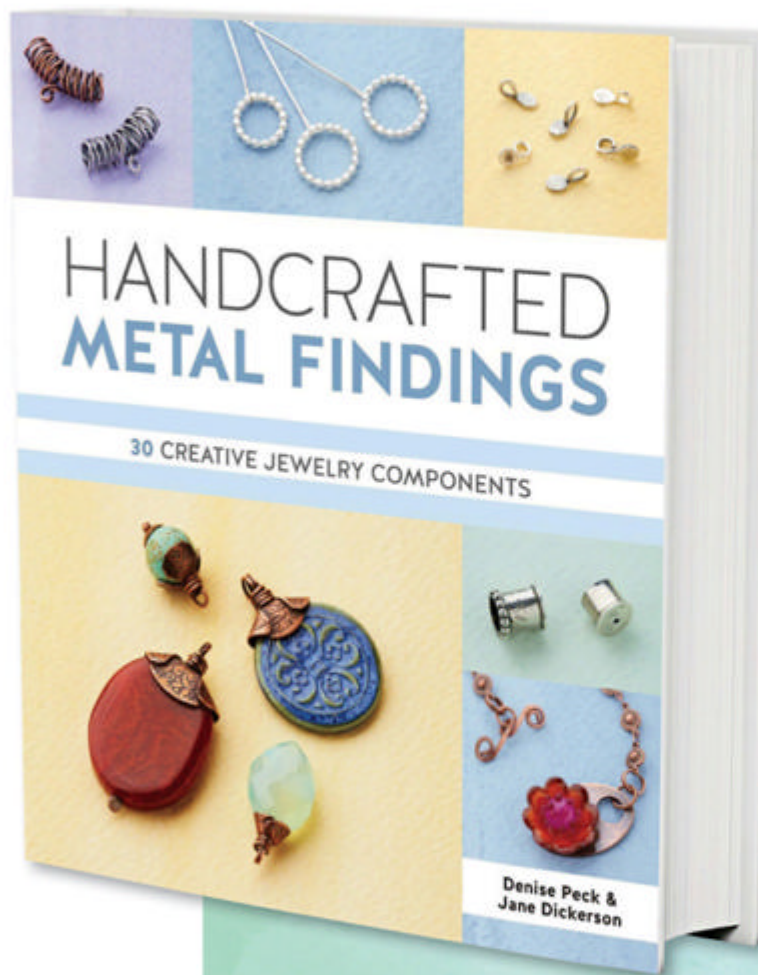
Join expert metalsmith and jewelry tool designer Bill Fretz for his video workshop dedicated to explaining all that 26 of his signature hammers can do. Learn about forming and forging, and create exciting surface textures and beautiful mirror finishes through expert planishing. Not only will you learn how to use your hammers effectively, but you will see the diverse uses they have.

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LET US HELP YOU MAKE YOUR OWN FINDINGS . . .



... with wire and sheet:

Even the most experienced jewelry makers can have difficulties when it comes to making their own findings — clasps, charms, ear wires, bails, head pins, etc. *Handcrafted Metal Findings*, a new book by Jane Dickerson and *Step By Step Wire Jewelry* Editor-in-Chief Denise Peck, gives you step-by-step instructions for creating your own findings from wire, sheet metal, or a mix of both. It includes 30 findings tutorials which require only basic jewelry-making skills and basic tools. Some of the findings in the book require soldering skills, while others use simple cold connections. So there's quite a nice range of skill levels and techniques.

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Freeform wire art jewelry

Creating stylish jewelry with wire is big! But a lot of jewelry artists struggle to find their own wire style. In her new book, *Freeform Wire Art Jewelry*, Gayle Bird says, "With a bit of freedom and plenty of solid techniques, you can learn to create your own style and begin making jewelry that is instantly recognizable as yours alone." The book starts with the basics of wire jewelry design and then teaches you the techniques you'll need to find your own creative designs. **Available now at <http://bit.ly/freeformwireljj>.**



LEARN TO SOLDER . . .



... using small torches with Kate Richbourg:

"Why use a small butane torch? They're perfect for small spaces, they're easy to use, the torch and fuel are readily available, they're economical, and they're large enough for most DIY applications." That's what Kate Richbourg has to say to anyone interested in small torches for jewelry making. You can learn a lot more with the "Micro Torch Soldering Collection." It includes Kate's DVD, "Make Soldered Jewelry with 6 Easy to Use Torches;" *Simple Soldering* (book); an OnDemand download of Kate's webinar, "Small-Space Jewelry Soldering;" and much more. It even includes a large flame butane torch.

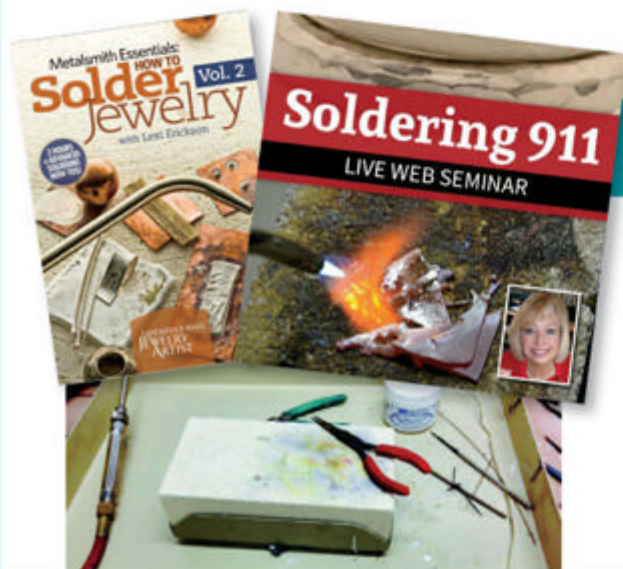
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Online with Connie Fox:

"Soldiering Jewelry with Confidence — Butt Joints," the second of Connie Fox's three online soldering courses at Craft U, will be offered late this summer. The four-week course will bring you detailed step-by-step instructions on how to make this foundational solder joint. Text, images, and videos will show you exactly what to do to hone your soldering skills. Connie will offer tips and tricks you can use to create butt joints, as well as projects that will allow you to practice your techniques. She'll also give students feedback and advice as they master butt joints.

GET MORE INFO AND REGISTER FOR THIS AND OTHER ONLINE CRAFT U COURSES AT [HTTP://BIT.LY/CRAFTULJJA](http://bit.ly/craftuljja).



... with Lexi Erickson's basic and deluxe collections:

Two soldering collections are offered from soldering maven Lexi Erickson. The "Lexi Erickson Soldering Basic Collection" includes the magazine *Making Soldered Jewelry*; Lexi's DVDs, "How to Solder Jewelry, Volumes 1 and 2;" an OnDemand download of Lexi's webinar, "Soldering 911;" and Sara Sanford's ebook, *Complete Guide to Soldering*. **Available now at <http://bit.ly/lexibasicbundle>.** The Deluxe Collections offers everything in the Basic Collection as well as a basic soldering kit from EuroTool and Lexi's Soldering Station. **Available now at <http://bit.ly/lexideluxebundle>.**



EASY METAL JEWELRY 2015

The editors of *Step By Step Wire Jewelry* present the 2015 edition of *Easy Metal Jewelry*. This special magazine offers 30 all-new metal jewelry projects for every skill level. Each project can be made at your kitchen table — perfect for jewelry artists with limited space or resources. The magazine also includes “Work Small & Work Smart,” a feature article by Melissa Cable on how to make metal jewelry in small studio spaces. There is also a guide to handheld torches by Kate Richbourg.

AVAILABLE NOW AT [HTTP://BIT.LY/EASYMETAL15LJJA](http://bit.ly/easymetal15ljja).

Check these out, too...

- *DIY WRAP BRACELETS* BY KEIKO SAKAMOTO (BOOK)
- *TORCH FIRED ENAMELING* WITH BARBARA LEWIS (CRAFT U COURSE)

Look who's teaching at Bead Fest



Lapidary Journal Jewelry Artist Senior Editor
Helen Driggs on BeadFest:



“This year, I’m teaching a nice mix of technique classes well suited to the mixed-media artist who wants to add some metalwork to their palette.

My favorite class is one I have revived from several years ago and expanded into a two-day workshop: “Metals 101: Jewelry Making Tools and Techniques for Beginners” on August 19 and August 20. I’ll provide you with a toolbox of your own basic jewelry-making tools: saw, blades, ring clamp, pliers, etc. I will teach you how to use every tool in the kit, and you’ll take them home with you at the end of the workshop. We’ll measure, saw, file, sand, and polish, using exercises that’ll help you learn about your tools. You’ll learn to prepare and texture metal, rivet, create a metal cuff bracelet on a mandrel, and even solder a ring band. I’ll help you get confident about different jewelry metals, tell you where to get them, which kind to use for what, but most important, teach you how to use your tools *the right way* and how to *make things the right way* so you can start on the road to making well-

crafted jewelry that will last for a very long time. And we will have fun doing it, too, because after all, that’s the whole point!”

Helen will also be teaching “Beginning Lapidary: Create Your First Cabochon” as well as three different “Rotary Tool Demystified” classes— “Dremels Only,” “Flex Shaft Only,” and “Advanced Techniques.”

And don’t miss the wide variety of other classes at BeadFest from some of the biggest names in jewelry making, including Leslie Rogalski, Debora Mauser, Kim St. Jean, Jackie Truty, Eva Sherman, Susan Lenart-Kazmer, Kate Richbourg, and lots of others. A wide range of topics will be available — beading, chain maille, wire wrapping and weaving, metalworking, metal clay, selling your jewelry, and much more. Bead Fest

Philadelphia 2015 will be held at the Philadelphia Expo Center at Oaks in August. The expo will run from August 21 through 23, while the workshops will be held from August 19 through 23. **For a complete list and schedule of workshops and to register, visit <http://bit.ly/beadfest15ljja>.**



Charles Lewton-Brain
Foldformed Vessel
PHOTO: COURTESY CENTER
FOR METAL ARTS



EXPLORE FOLD FORMING

... with Charles Lewton-Brain

As part of its Small Metals Workshop series, the Center for Metal Arts will offer "Fold Forming for Vessels with Charles Lewton-Brain." The three-day course will run from July 24-27 at the Center's facilities in Florida, New York. It will focus on key foldforming techniques and how to adapt them to vessel making. Students will experience demonstrations by fold forming expert Charles Lewton-Brain as well as hands-on studio time to make and refine their own creations. Visit centerformetalarts.com for more info and to register for the workshop.

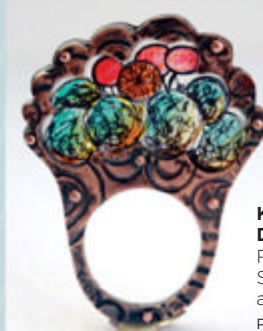
Center for Metal Arts 2015

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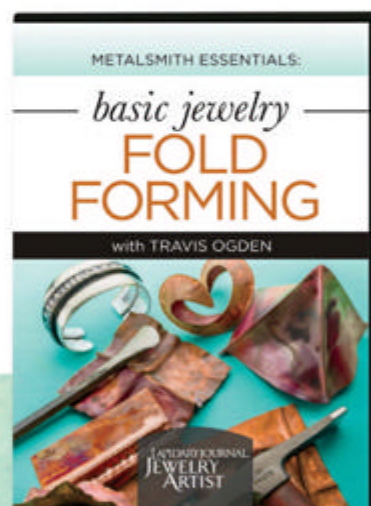


COMING IN AUGUST



Kristen Denbow
Riveted Ring
Shrink plastic and copper
PHOTO: KRISTEN DENBOW

- Riveted ring project
- Heads up: tiaras are trending
- How to do market research
- Forged silver rose



... with Travis Ogden:

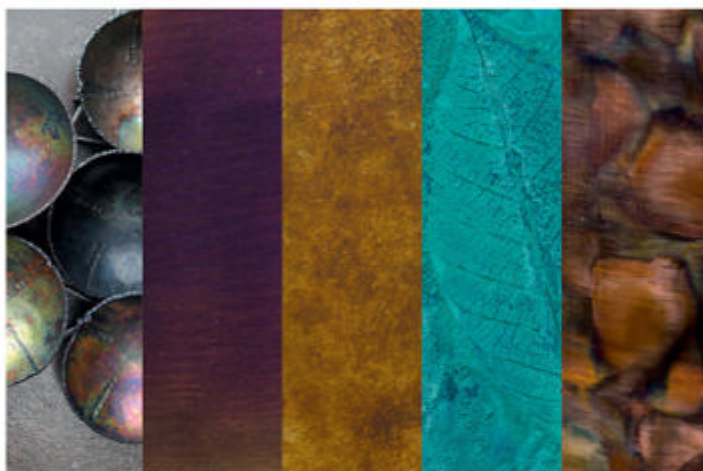
LEARN THE FUNDAMENTALS WITH TRAVIS OGDEN IN HIS DVD, "BASIC JEWELRY FOLD FORMING." AVAILABLE AT [HTTP://BIT.LY/FOLDFORMOGDEN](http://bit.ly/foldformogden).

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? Facets accepts news and images of new products, innovations, industry happenings, and events as space permits. Share your news by sending items to: KRosenbusch@interweave.com; or Lapidary Journal Jewelry Artist, 88 Glocker Way, #299, Pottstown, PA 19465. Please be sure to indicate "Facets" on the subject line or envelope.

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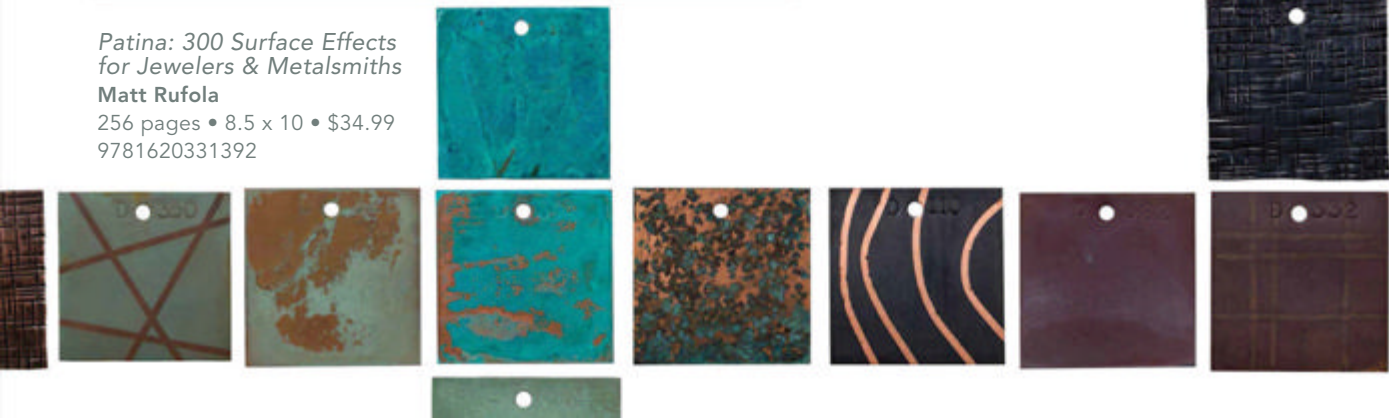
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ASK THE EXPERTS

questions, answers, & tips

By Tom & Kay Benham,
contributing editors



FORMING TEXTURED METAL

Q How do I dome or shape a textured sheet of silver? I know I need to protect the texture, so how do I do that? What kind of mallet I should use? What is the proper surface to work on?

Geraldine Borad, Uruguay, South America
VIA JEWELRY MAKING DAILY ASK THE EXPERTS FORUM

A It's gratifying to learn that we have readers in Uruguay, South America, Geraldine, and your problem is universal to metalsmiths around the world. Here's our advice:

Never form textured metal between a steel ball and a steel dapping block as this will guarantee that the texture will be ironed out flat. Wood dapping balls and dapping blocks are best for forming textured metal without any loss of the pattern, and some metalsmiths prefer using rawhide or urethane mallets to form with.

If you are unable to locate a set of wood dapping tools, you may have to improvise and make your own. We have often done this in the past without any problems. On the end grain of a pine (or other soft wood) 2 x 4, use a marker to outline the final shape; then use the ball peen end of a large hammer to crush an indentation at the size and depth you require for doming the metal. Round the end of a wood dowel large enough to fit into the shape and use this to form a dome. If reasonable

care is taken, this should not affect your texture. You can also dome metal using a sandbag and a rounded nylon mallet.

RESIN/ENAMEL RING QUESTION

Q My wife asked what I'd like for a graduation present when I finish my bachelor's degree this spring, and a class ring was my top choice. I was disappointed to find out that the price far exceeded what we'd be willing to pay (\$600 for the cheapest stainless steel ring). However, my father-in-law is a dentist whose kids have used his metal casting equipment to make rings in the past. Jump ahead a few weeks, and I have a friend studying manufacturing who helped me design a ring in his 3-D software program, as well as a local jeweler with a 5-axis mill who will mill out a wax version to use for the casting. I've found a source to buy the metal, and the only question remaining is the setting.

I've designed the ring similar to a lot of the "stadium" styles — the center or setting is a rounded rectangular recess, but with the school's logo not recessed in the center (so it stands level with the top of the recess). But now I'm left trying to figure out what to fill the open area. I need something that is a clear blue material that can be poured into and set in silver (sterling or fine). I'd like it to be as permanent as possible and relatively easy to use (get really

good result after a bit of practice).

I was originally thinking of using ice resin but have concerns about both its durability and finish. I don't really want a convex or concave surface, but a flat finish. This led me to look into a clear enamel, which from what I understand would give a harder, more durable finished material, but seems very finicky and requires a lot of experience and equipment.

So what should I do? Will resin last well? Will it scratch and cloud like a clear plastic? Could I/should I try a clear enamel? Or is there another option I don't know about?

Jared Jones, Provo, UT

VIA JEWELRY MAKING DAILY ASK THE EXPERTS FORUM

A In our July 2014 column, we responded to a gentleman who wanted to repair his championship ring. The product we recommended is Ceramit-Low Temperature Curing Hard Enamel from Otto Frei, (ottofrei.com, 800-772-3457). It is available in black and several other colors. You can download the Ceramitation Guide to using this product from Krohn Industries at krohnindustries.com.

RESPONSE TO ADLENS GLASSES

Linda Osburn, Garrison, MN via Jewelry Making Daily Ask The Experts Forum posted this in response to our tip in the April, 2015 column:

"I ordered a pair of these and love them. When I first found these I was thinking of you guys and considering sending you a note about them. Then I opened up the latest Lapidary Journal Jewelry Artist, and you had written a note about them. Besides working well for close up work, they seem to work well for me at intermediate depths. Because they are adjustable, I can set them for my preferred distance

ASK THE EXPERTS VIA JEWELRY MAKING DAILY

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Please include your full name and where you live. Answers and tips will appear in print with more online.



THICKNESSES OF METAL?

Gauge numbers, decimal dimensions and mm sizes — which one does one choose when ordering metal sheet or wire? Beginning metalsmiths sometimes feel overwhelmed when first purchasing metal sheet or wire from a jewelry supplier as suppliers may list the materials by gauge numbers, decimal dimension, or mm size interchangeably without conversion information readily available. It seems one is expected to eventually have this information memorized and neatly filed away in your brain.

There is hope, as most jewelry suppliers often have common conversion charts and other helpful information tucked away somewhere in their catalogs; one that quickly comes to mind is Rio Grande who lists the Brown & Sharpe Gauge equivalency chart of gauge, inches, and metric mm thicknesses. Make a copy and tape it in a convenient spot for future reference. Of course, if you are “new school,” this information is instantly at hand on one’s cell phone or other electronic devices. Google works instantly online, and there are a plethora of jewelry conversion apps available for download.

Next you must have a way to actually measure the metal. Metal sheet and wire are much too thin to measure with a standard ruler. The classical, time-proved tool is the Brown & Sharpe thickness gauge. This steel tool has grooves of various widths around the peripheral edge, to determine the thickness of the sheet and wire. Just slide the sheet or wire into each groove until you find the one that it just fits into; the B&S gauge number is engraved right next to the groove so that is the thickness of the metal. These gauges come in several different shapes, but they work the same way.

Micrometers and calipers will also measure the metal’s thickness, but they operate in a different manner and it’s best to follow the instructions that come with the measuring tool you purchase.

A very handy item to have on your bench or in your tool box is a key chain with discs strung on it. Each disc should be a sample of the most frequently used metal sheet that you use with its gauge size stamped on it. When you have a piece of metal you’re not sure of, you can make a quick comparison to your samples. After a while, you will learn to recognize the gauge sizes by sight and touch. It just takes time to learn this.

Also, the staff of most jewelry suppliers are well informed and quite helpful if you have any questions. If they don’t know the answer, they will find the person who does. Good luck!

for different tasks.

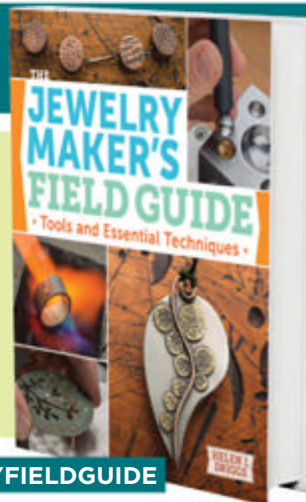
The other reason that I was attracted to them is that it seems like these would be an excellent item for people around the world to get better vision without the expense of an eye doctor, especially in locations where eye doctors are simply unavailable. I think that these glasses will be a hit worldwide. No doctor’s appointment, no optical dispensary. Better vision for all and deliverable into remote areas.

Another plus, is that I now have a spare pair, as I am constantly misplacing my glasses.”

METAL THICKNESS AND MORE

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The Jewelry Maker’s Field Guide by Helen Driggs



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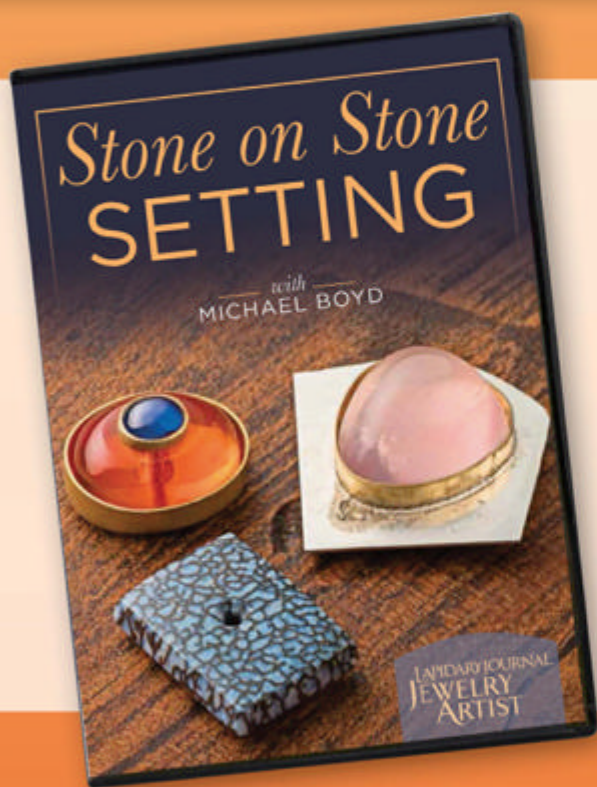
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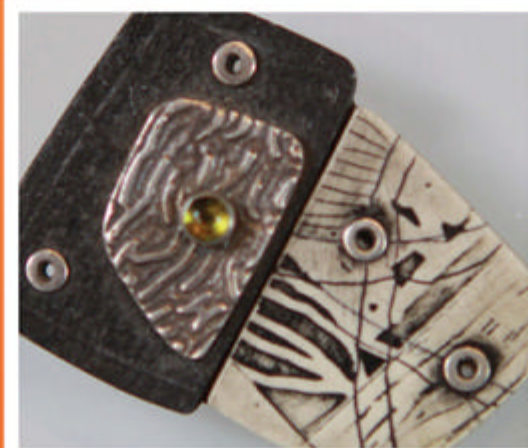


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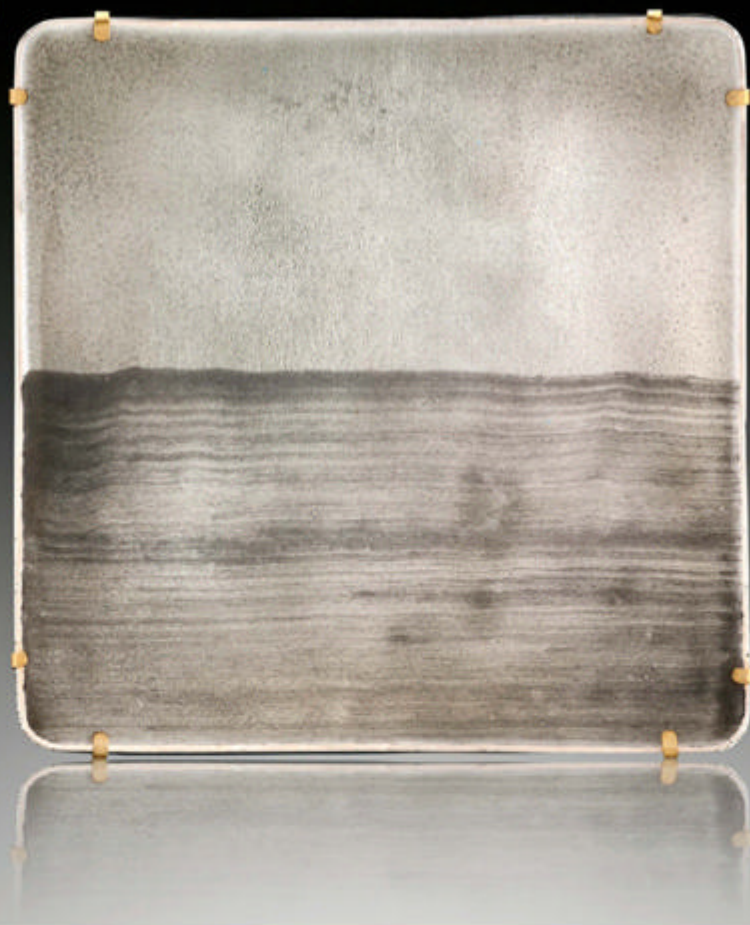


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DONE

I taught myself to enamel, and I think the freedom of not starting out with a set of techniques has allowed me to find a fresh aesthetic in my work.

DOING

I'm always pushing myself to try new ways of working with enamel. Recently, I've been trying to come up with ways of using enamel like stones.

FIRST PIECE

The first piece I made in an introductory fabrication class was a bezel set turquoise ring. It was very simple, not very inspired. I went looking for it after answering this question and found it in the bottom

of a jewelry drawer. I think it will stay there.

HEROES

John Iverson is my big time hero. He is a master technically, but his work is not about the technique, it is spare and minimal, always inventive. I think Petra Class uses stones in the most magical way. Her sense of color and scale is perfection, and there is a lightness to her work. Namu Cho's work blows my mind. I could get lost in his intricately detailed worlds. I have no idea how he does what he does, but I'm so glad he is so obsessed.

DESIGN SOURCES

Art has always been my inspiration. I

spend a lot of time in museums. I have been focusing recently on the work of Gerhard Richter, Ellsworth Kelly, and Hokusai. I recently discovered Alexandra Kehayoglou, an artist from Buenos Aires who designed a custom sculpted art rug for my favorite designer, Dries Van Noten. It's an amazing piece that has given me some new ideas.

FAVORITE PART OF DOING

I love the process of moving from conception to finished piece. There are many steps in the middle that are crazy making. I still struggle with technique, but seeing an idea you're excited about become a real thing is magic.

ON BENCH NOW

I'm working on a series of opalescent enamel pieces with painted graphite. There are a few in various stages of development on my bench.

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Photo was taken in the Santa Fe, N.M., studio of award-winning jewelers Robin Wayne and Ryan Roberts.

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